

The Idea of Iran Vol. 6



# THE AGE OF THE SELJUQS

Edited by **Edmund Herzig**  
and **Sarah Stewart**

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# The Age of the Seljuqs

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# The Age of the Seljuqs

## *The Idea of Iran*

### Volume VI

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# Foreword

Edmund Herzig

The chapters brought together in this volume were first presented as conference papers at two symposia in the Idea of Iran series, held in the School of Oriental and African Studies in London in 2011 and 2012. All of them deal, in one way or another, with the question of the Turks and Iran. If we include in our understanding of the Iranian world all the territories whose inhabitants spoke an Iranian language, including Bactrian, Khwarezmian, Sogdian, Tokharian and others, then Turks have been an important and growing presence in that world since the most ancient times. Even if we restrict ourselves to the territories of the Sasanian Empire, during the latter years of that empire Turks were an important presence in the eastern frontier provinces of Sogdia and Tokharestan, where Turkish rulers were among the strongest adversaries of the advancing Arab-Muslim armies in the seventh and eighth centuries.

During the Islamic era, Turks entered the *Dār al-Islām*, and especially Transoxiana and Iran, in a variety of ways. From early on, Muslim sources express admiration for the martial qualities of the Turks, and they were in high demand as slave soldiers (*ghulām*, *mamlūk*) at the caliphal court in Baghdad and in the armies of provincial emirs, including those of the independent Iranian dynasties of Khorasan, Sistan and Transoxiana. Slaves were acquired through capture on campaign and through trade – the Samanids being heavily involved in the trade in Turkish slaves from the lands to the north and east of their realm. Only non-Muslims could be enslaved, however, and as more of the Turks of the steppe lands beyond the Samanid borders converted to Islam (a process that is also particularly associated with the Samanid ninth and tenth centuries), so increasing numbers of Turks entered Transoxiana as free men, some invited in by local rulers as *condottieri*, others entering in search of booty or pasture, or to escape defeat at the hands of rival tribes in the steppes, or perhaps because of demographic pressures. Sources for the history of this process are extremely sparse, and historians will continue to debate the relative significance of the various push and pull factors that brought the Turks in increasing numbers into the settled lands of Transoxiana, Khorasan and Iran. We cannot be certain of the numbers involved or of the dating of the various stages of the advance of Turkish settlement, which led in time to significant parts of those lands becoming Turkish-speaking, to the extinction of several of

the East Iranian languages, and to a shift in lifestyle and production away from settled agriculture and towards nomadic pastoralism.

If the Samanid period marked one set of milestones – when the Turkish slave trade peaked, the process of conversion to Islam gathered momentum in the steppe lands, and Turkish warriors became the mainstay of the armies of the East – the Ghaznavid era (977–1040) marked another. Notwithstanding their origins as slave soldiers of the Samanids, the Ghaznavids became the first significant Turkish dynasty in the *Dār al-Islām*, but by no means the last – Turkish rule became the norm not only in Iran, but throughout the Islamic East from then until the modern era (continuing with few interruptions in Iran itself until the demise of the Qajar dynasty in 1926). In the mid eleventh century the Ghaznavids fell to the Seljuqs, who unlike their predecessors came to power at the head of their own tribal forces. Under the Seljuqs, Turkish tribal incursions into Transoxiana, Khorasan and Iran gathered pace and extended their range to the west: Azerbaijan, the South Caucasus and Anatolia, often with the active encouragement of the sultans, who preferred to keep the restive tribes occupied in wars on the frontiers rather than causing trouble at home. Controlling the tribes – who are mostly referred to in the sources as *ghuzz*, *oghuz* and Turcoman – and minimizing the disruption and damage they caused to the settled population remained a constant problem for the Seljuqs and later dynasties. On the one hand the tribes provided the military muscle that brought these dynasties to power, allowed them to conquer vast territories and to defeat their internal and external enemies; on the other they resisted control, gave priority to their own tribal loyalties and interests over those of the dynasty, and were unimpressed by imperial pretensions.

The political history of this age is full of the tension between these centripetal and centrifugal forces. The Persian Islamic tradition was strongly disposed towards the concentration of power in the imperial centre, the clear identification of the empire with the solitary person of the caliph, king or sultan, elevated above other men, with succession following from father to son within the royal family. By contrast the steppe tradition of the Turks (and later Mongols) viewed authority more as a family enterprise, belonging to a lead clan within the tribe or confederacy, whose senior males parcelled out the benefits of power (most notably land) among themselves for the benefit of their respective tribal followers, and who each controlled their own tribal military contingents. Supreme authority, insofar as the need for such was recognized and exercised at all, belonged to the senior member of the ruling clan. That seniority was attained through some combination of age, peer recognition and martial prowess – the last quality often put to the test in armed combat among rivals. This was a system that worked well enough in the tribal context of steppe life, but was hopeless for the maintenance of cohesion in a large empire, when every succession risked sparking protracted civil war. The volatility of

dynasty and empire in medieval and early modern Iranian history is thus intimately connected with the Turkish tribal factor.

The Seljuqs – like the Ghaznavids before them – rapidly integrated into a pattern of government that has been described as a Turko-Persian symbiosis. In the classic formulation of ‘men of the sword’ and ‘men of the pen’, Turks provided the military power and Persians ran the administration; Turkish sultans occupied the royal throne, while Persian viziers ruled the divan. The ideological character of the Seljuq Empire was heavily indebted to the preceding Ghaznavid and Samanid regimes, which in turn grew out of the Perso-Islamic imperial system of the Abbasid caliphate. It was founded on strict adherence to the shari’a and religious orthodoxy and an emphasis on justice: preventing oppression of the common people by subordinates and officials, and maintaining a proper balance among the component elements of society. In the writings of the age that are concerned with the conduct of kings and problems of government, we find a conscious looking back to both Islamic and Iranian traditions: the Prophet Muhammad and his successors provide one model of ideal government; Khusraw I Anushirvan the Just, and the Sasanian Kings of Kings provide another, complementary model. For later dynasties the Samanid and Ghaznavid pioneers of this pattern of government – Ismail I and Mahmud of Ghazna – also became archetypes of good government to be referenced and imitated.

Perhaps ironically, it is during this era, when Turks took up the reins of power in Iran, that Persian became firmly established as the language of government throughout the Eastern Islamic world (and with substantial penetration to the west – Syria, Anatolia and even Egypt – and east into China also). The Samanid controversies over whether Arabic or Persian should be the language of the state chancellery were settled conclusively in favour of Persian, which also became a *lingua franca* of high culture, most notably poetry, flourishing at the courts of Turkish rulers from the Ghaznavids until the Mughals – Ferdowsi’s unhappy experience with Mahmud of Ghazna being the exception, not the rule.

Recent decades have seen a growing interest in the study of what Robert Canfield called Turko-Persia, a subject for research that was neglected in the past, in large part because the nineteenth- and twentieth-century dominance of nationalist historiography discouraged historians of Iran (or Turkey, for that matter) from focusing on this phenomenon of creative interdependence between Turks and Persians. To this day there is little agreement among scholars as to the success or otherwise of this Turko-Persian system of government and culture. To some extent the question is one of perspective: strong central government concentrating resources in an imperial capital may be good for the inhabitants of the capital, but less so for those living on the imperial frontiers. Surviving sources (whether written, architectural or material) – including those used by most of the contributors to this volume – are strongly biased in favour

of elite rather than subaltern perspectives. The authors of dynastic histories and Mirrors for Princes fear anarchy much more than tyranny, and reflect the priorities of the city – mainly the imperial capital – rather than those of the provinces and the countryside, let alone the illiterate peasant or tribesman. The history of those dubbed rebels and heretics by the powers that be, and local history and archaeology, may provide some corrective to this elite bias, but the study of these is still in its infancy for pre-modern Iranian history (Farhad Daftary's chapter on the Ismailis provides one example in this volume).

Turning now to the chapters of this book, in the first István Vásáry looks back to the early history of the Turks in the wider Iranian world, discussing the debates about the dating and distribution of the early Turkish presence in Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan before considering the two distinct patterns of acculturation to the Persianate, or Perso-Islamic, world of the first Turkish dynasties: the Ghaznavids, Seljuqs and Qarakhanids. On the one hand, the Ghaznavids and Seljuqs represent a direct line of succession from the Samanid system of government and of cultural patronage of Islamic orthodoxy and Arabic and Persian letters and science (hardly surprising, perhaps, in the case of the Ghaznavids, given their origins as Samanid generals and governors). They showed little or no interest in the public promotion of Turkish culture or language and fully embraced the Turko-Persian synthesis archetypally embodied in the relationship between the sultans Alp Arslan and Malik Shah and their vizier Nizām al-Mulk. On the other, the Qarakhanids represent a quite different tradition, pioneering the development of Turko-Islamic culture through their promotion of Turkish *adab*. Despite – or perhaps because of – this significant contribution, the Qarakhanids have always been neglected in Iranian history writing, and Vásáry devotes the greater part of his chapter to discussion of the first works of Islamic Turkish literature and the ways in which their authors integrated Turks into the creation and foundation narratives of Islam and Iran and assimilated Turkish and Perso-Islamic ideals of government in the early Turkish Mirror for Princes work, the *Qutadghu Bilig* ('Royal Wisdom').

Nizām al-Mulk is the subject of Chapter 2, in which Carole Hillenbrand subjects this 'maverick vizier' to critical scrutiny. While paying due credit to his extraordinary achievements and cherished reputation, she does not shy away from concluding that his career provides an illustration of the maxim that 'power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. Hillenbrand sees Nizām al-Mulk as having pushed the boundaries of the office of vizier to their furthest possible extent, giving him unprecedented reach into every area of the public life of the Seljuq state (into which he energetically inserted his sons and *protégés*). He and his network effectively ran the empire, but for the vizier himself the most difficult challenge was the need all the while to manage the always-delicate relations with his Turkish sultans, whose ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds were so different from his own. For better or worse, Nizām al-Mulk helped shape the character of the vizierate for future



generations, while his *Mirrors for Princes* work, the *Siyāsatnāma*, preserved for posterity the fruits of his long experience of running the empire. Hillenbrand focuses on the ways in which Nizām al-Mulk went beyond the usual functions of the vizierate, particularly in respect of his successful career as a military commander, although, as she notes, he was by no means unique in this respect. She attributes to his military prowess the unusual distinction of being awarded the title and role of *atābeg*, which was otherwise reserved for Turkish military chiefs.

A fitting antagonist for Nizām al-Mulk is the subject of Chapter 3, in which Farhad Daftary follows the career of the remarkable *dā'ī* and revolutionary leader Hasan-i Sabbāh and the history of the Ismaili state-within-a-state that he founded with his capture of the fortress of Alamūt in 1090. The chapter explores the history of the Ismailis in Iran and of their relations with their great enemies the Seljuqs. Daftary argues that in addition to the Shi'i and Fatimid causes, Hasan-i Sabbāh's revolt against the Seljuqs was inspired by Persian 'national' sentiment, resisting alien Turkish rule in a way reminiscent of the earlier anti-Arab and anti-Abbasid uprisings of the Khurramīs. Daftary attributes the Ismailis' use of Persian as the language of religion (which was unique among Muslim communities at that time) to the same motives. In Daftary's view, this 'national' agenda, coupled with the socio-economic egalitarianism of the Ismailis' accounts for the widespread support they achieved among urban and rural communities, including many who were not themselves Ismaili.

In Chapter 4 David Durand-Guédy examines the Seljuq Empire from the viewpoint of its (western) capital, Isfahan. In contrast to Daftary's emphasis on the opposition of Persian subjects to Turkish overlords, Durand-Guédy focuses on the distinction between the parts of Iran to the west of the great deserts (and in close connection with Iraq and Baghdad) and the parts to the east, notably Khorasan, with its ties to Transoxiana and Tokharestan. From the Isfahani perspective, he argues, the most acutely felt change caused by the Seljuq conquest was the Khorasani takeover of the key positions of city and provincial government during the vizierate of Nizām al-Mulk. The Turkish sultans and their troops, by contrast, impinged much less on the affairs of the Isfahanis, staying as they did, for the most part, safely outside the city walls. In Durand-Guédy's view, the Ismaili mobilization in Isfahan should also be understood in terms of responses to the Seljuq-Khorasani takeover of the city, with antagonistic networks fighting for control of resources and symbols of authority. He argues that it is meaningless to consider Seljuq rule in Isfahan in terms of Turkish domination over Iranian subjects, since the process of domination involved both Turks and Iranians in new patterns of interdependence to control resources. In this, he concludes, it has much in common with the period of the Arab Islamic conquests in Iran, when elements of the local Iranian elite allied themselves with the conquerors against rival

elements. Durand-Guédy notes also that the ‘Turkish’ rule of the Seljuqs had the perhaps unexpected consequence of introducing the use of New Persian to Isfahan, which has hitherto remained loyal to Arabic letters. In this too, the role of the Khorasani viziers was at least as significant as that of their Turkish overlords.

Vanessa Van Renterghem’s Chapter 5 juxtaposes the view from Baghdad with Durand-Guédy’s Isfahani perspective. Van Renterghem demolishes the long-held view (whose ultimate source is the Seljuqs’ own propaganda) that the Seljuq takeover of Baghdad represented a liberation of the Abbasid caliphs from their burdensome subordination to the heretical Buyids. Rather, she argues, the Seljuqs’ relationship to the Abbasid caliphs, while phrased in terms of loyal subordination, was in fact one which allowed the sultans to curtail the caliphs’ capacity for independent action, above all military action, and to extract substantial revenues from Baghdad and Iraq in return for an often nebulous ‘protection’. The Seljuqs (or their viziers) also interfered at least as energetically as any of their predecessors in the caliphal administration in Baghdad. This pattern changed in the twelfth century: as Seljuq power waned, the Abbasid caliphs gradually recovered real power, including control over their own military forces, and began for the first time since the mid tenth century to act as a regional power able to compete successfully for dominance in Iraq. While few of the Seljuq sultans spent much time in Baghdad, they and their viziers contributed substantially to the city through construction (mostly on the east bank of the Tigris) of palaces, residences, mosques, madrasas and markets. And if the sultans themselves were mainly absent, there was a significant influx of prominent Khorasanis to Baghdad. Apart from the officials, some of them played leading roles in the Shāfi’ī and Hanafī madrasas and Sufi *ribāts* that multiplied during the Seljuq age.

After the explorations of political, social and religious history of the preceding chapters, Chapter 6 presents a forensic examination of two important works of literature (already cited by other contributors to this volume) and casts doubt on the authorship of both the *Siyar al-Mulūk* attributed to Nizām al-Mulk and the *Nasīhat al-Mulūk* ascribed to al-Ghazālī. Alexey Khismatulin argues that the work known as *Siyar al-Mulūk* is in fact a composite work assembled by the well-known Seljuq court poet Muhammad Mu‘izzī Nīshābūrī on the basis of the contract of employment (list of duties) of Nizām al-Mulk, embellished with additional chapters and interpolations composed by Mu‘izzī himself. The poet attempted to pass the composition off as the work of the great vizier to further his career during the dog days following the death of Sultan Malikshāh. The identity of the perpetrator of this fraud was obscured until now owing to the addition by a medieval copyist of a single dot into the copy of the manuscript that served as the template for all subsequent copies, causing scholars to read the name as Maghribī instead of Mu‘izzī. The chapter thus provides a salutary lesson on the pitfalls of manuscript-based research into

medieval Iranian history, in addition to its contribution to our understanding of the character and authorship of two of the most important and widely cited medieval Persian Mirrors for Princes.

Chapter 7 continues the textual turn begun in Chapter 6. Here Asghar Seyed-Gohrab discusses the poetry of the Ghaznavid and Seljuq periods. Literary historians have traditionally classified the development of classical Persian poetry into three main stylistic trends, each associated with a particular period of development: 1) the Khorasani style of the Samanid and Ghaznavid eras; 2) the Iraqi style of the Seljuq and post-Seljuq age; and 3) the Indian or Hindī style of the Safavids and their successors. Yet, as Seyed-Gohrab argues, the boundaries – whether stylistic or chronological – between these styles are not hard and fast and there are many continuities between the later Khorasani poets, such as Manūchehrī, and poets of the Iraqi school, such as the Seljuq poet laureate Mu‘izzī. Focusing on the transition from the Khorasani to the Iraqi styles, he gives a detailed analysis of two poems by the above-mentioned poets to demonstrate their quest for originality and appeal in a milieu in which poets were conscious that whatever had impressed and delighted in the work of the previous generation would appear stale to the well-read and discriminating audiences of their day. He demonstrates these poets’ mastery of extended description and riddling to build suspense, and of complex series of metaphors, increasingly ambiguous and open to understanding on several levels, to display their sophistication and excellence in their art. In the case of the Mu‘izzī poem, he shows how the poet’s literary pyrotechnics are deployed to prepare the listener for the serious purpose of the poem, an elegy on the death of a prince, and challenges the traditional hostile appraisal of Mu‘izzī as an artificial and insincere poet.

In the final chapter, by Robert Hillenbrand, the focus shifts from texts and literature to architecture and to that pre-eminent Seljuq masterpiece, the Friday Mosque of Isfahan. The chapter offers a close comparison of the mosque’s two dome chambers, the south dome erected by Nizām al-Mulk and the north one, shortly afterwards, by his great rival, Tāj al-Mulk. Through close architectural comparison, reflection on the debates about the function of the north dome (which Hillenbrand resolves in favour of a grand entrance chamber), and examination of the inscriptions of the two domes, Hillenbrand develops the argument that the north dome should be understood first and foremost in the context of the political rivalry of the two viziers, and in particular of Tāj al-Mulk’s determination to show that he could go one better than his ageing rival. The unmistakably deliberate juxtaposition of his superior north dome to Nizām al-Mulk’s more ponderous south dome symbolized in the most public possible way the case for a ‘changing of the guard’. Thus the prime function of the north dome – one of the most sublime buildings in the whole history of Iranian architecture – had less to do with worship or the other pious functions of the

mosque, and more to do with reinforcing Tāj al-Mulk's political ambitions and furthering his intrigues.

### *Note on Transliteration*

New Persian emerged as a literary language under Samanid and Ghaznavid patronage, and was well established before the Seljuq era, by which time histories and Mirrors for Princes were already being written in Persian. Nevertheless, the main narrative and documentary sources for the history of this period are in Arabic. Turkish features only very rarely as the language in which texts were composed, but is frequently encountered in personal and place names, titles and other terms. This linguistic polyphony creates some challenges for transliteration. For Arabic, the most widely used system among anglophone scholars is that of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. The *IJMES* system provides also for the transliteration of Persian (and Turkish), but in recent years part of the Iranian studies community has moved away from what some perceive as a system that forces Persian to conform too closely to Arabic. Systems that render Persian sounds more accurately are gaining in popularity. Thus the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* and the journal *Iranian Studies* use systems that render the short vowels and some other characters in a more 'Persian' way. For this volume we have adopted both systems, retaining *IJMES* for Arabic and Turkish, but giving contributors a choice between a modified version of the *IJMES* system (retaining the long vowel markers, but omitting the diacritic marks that distinguish certain consonants) or the *Iranian Studies* system when it comes to the transliteration of Persian. This compromise is less than ideal, and leads in some cases to invidious or arbitrary choices as to whether a person or place or term should be considered Arabic or Persian (or Turkish) for transliteration purposes, and also to inconsistencies between chapters. It has the advantage, however, of flexibility in relation to contributors' preferences and respect for the multilingual primary source base of the chapters. Established anglicized forms such as Seljuq, Kurdistan, Hafiz, Isfahan, sultan, vizier, emir and Turcoman are used in preference to transliterated forms. In the foreword and bibliography the modified *IJMES* system has been used throughout.

# Two Patterns of Acculturation to Islam: The Qarakhanids versus the Ghaznavids and Seljuqs

István Vásáry  
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This paper makes an attempt to find answers to questions evoked by the fact that the main protagonists of the historical scene in the eastern lands of the Islamic Empire in the eleventh and twelfth centuries – the Qarakhanids, the Ghaznavids and the Seljuqs, all three founders of Islamic dynasties of Turkic descent – followed two different tracks in adapting their newly embraced Islamic culture. In the ninth and tenth centuries the Iranian Samanids of Transoxiana were instrumental in creating a new kind of Islamic polity and culture – for which the term ‘Persianate’ was later coined – thereby laying the foundations of ‘Perso-Islamic’ civilization. Having come to power in the Persianate world of Iran and Transoxiana, the Ghaznavids and the Seljuqs, whose ancestors were nomadic warriors and military slaves, readily accepted the superiority of Perso-Islamic high culture, and became fervent propagators of Persianate culture (*adab*), not even vaguely attempting to embed their aboriginal nomadic culture into the texture of Islam. No historical or literary work written in Turkic has come down to us from the Ghaznavids and the Seljuqs, Arabic and Persian being the only vehicles for the transmission of high culture. The use of the Turkic language and the currency of its folk traditions were confined to household and military circles. In sharp contrast, the Qarakhanids, though they wholeheartedly embraced the Persianate culture of the conquered land of Transoxiana, made decisive strides towards the creation of their own version of Turco-Islamic culture. Their role was as pioneering for the Muslim Turkic world as that of the Samanids was for the Perso-Islamic world. While they traced their ancestry to the legendary Tonga Alp Er, who was identified with the Iranian Afrāsiyāb, having imbibed the Persianate culture they set out at once to create a Turkic version of Islamic culture. The two solitary beacons of early Turco-Islamic culture are Yūsuf Balasaghūnī’s lengthy didactic poem, the *Qutadghu Bilig* (‘Royal Wisdom’, 1069), and Mahmūd al-Kāshgharī’s encyclopaedic compendium, the *Divān lughāt al-Turk* (‘Compendium of the Turkic Dialects’, 1077). But Qarakhanid Turkic literacy

was unable to take deep root, and Eastern Turkic (Khorezmian and Chagatay) literacy, like Western Turkic (Seljuq and Ottoman) literacy in the following centuries, was not a direct successor of Qarakhanid literacy. Seemingly, the digestion of the newly acquired Perso-Islamic identity and the creation of an entirely new Turco-Islamic culture exceeded the Qarakhanids' capacities. That may be the main reason why 'a period of cultural retrogression' (in W. Barthold's terms) came about during Qarakhanid rule in Transoxiana.

### *Introductory Thoughts on Turco-Persia*

Richard Nelson Frye, the great Iranian scholar at Harvard, made the following assessment of the contribution of Persian civilization to the formation of Islamic societies and culture: 'Many times I have emphasized that the present peoples of Central Asia, whether Iranian or Turkic-speaking, have one culture, one religion, one set of social values and traditions with only language separating them.'<sup>1</sup> The publishers of this volume seemingly acted in the spirit of these poignant words in deciding to convene a symposium, the fourth in the series 'The Idea of Iran', under the title 'Turks and Persians and the Spread of the Persianate World'. Although the contacts between the Iranian and Turkic worlds have long been well known, intensive research into the various aspects and forms of the Turco-Persian symbiosis have received a new impetus only during the past few decades.<sup>2</sup> This symbiosis may have emerged owing to the simultaneous presence of two factors: 1) The Iranian world has for centuries been inundated by Turkic (and in the thirteenth century also Mongol) waves of nomadic warriors, thus laying the basis for the contacts; 2) From the middle of the tenth century, most nomadic conquerors were Muslim (or became Islamized within a generation). This factor created the spiritual basis for a real symbiosis and collaboration between the two factions of the conquered Persianate societies: the Iranian agriculturalists and city-dwellers, on the one hand, and the Turkic pastoral nomads, on the other. The role of the Iranian Samanids of Transoxiana in the ninth and tenth centuries was instrumental in laying the foundations of a new kind of Islamic polity and culture, later dubbed 'Persianate' or 'Perso-Islamic', thereby broadening the horizon of the original 'Arabo-Islamic' world.

This paper will deal with the tenth and eleventh centuries, when three ethnically Turkic dynasties (chronologically, the Ghaznavids, the Qarakhanids, and the Seljuqs) assumed the dominant position in the political life of the eastern lands of Islam, having ousted from power the Iranian dynasties of the Samanids and the Buyids. It will attempt to find answers to questions evoked by the fact that the three main historical protagonists in these centuries followed two different tracks in adapting their newly embraced Islamic culture. In sharp contrast to the Ghaznavids and the Seljuqs, who adhered to and promoted Persianate culture, the Qarakhanids, while wholeheartedly embracing the Persianate culture of the conquered land of Transoxiana, made decisive

strides towards creating their own version of Turco-Islamic culture, using Turkic script. Robert Dankoff is absolutely right in claiming that 'Culturally, it was the [Qarakhanids] who played a role for the Muslim Turks similar to that of the Samanids for the Muslim Iranians a century before.'<sup>3</sup> That is why the Ghaznavids and the Seljuqs have always been treated with great predilection by Iranian scholarship (one must not forget that the pride of Iranian culture, Firdausī's *Shāhnāma*, was completed under the Ghaznavid Mahmūd's rule), while the study of the Qarakhanids was left mainly to Turcologists.

*The Pre-Tenth-Century Turkic Presence in the Eastern Islamic World: The Beginnings of Turco-Iranian Symbiosis*

There is an old debate concerning the appearance of Turkic ethnic elements in the Iranian world prior to the advent of the Ghaznavids and Seljuqs, roughly before the tenth century. In particular, the chronology of the Turkic presence in Transoxiana is a controversial issue. In earlier decades, scholars such as Nöldeke, Marquart and others stubbornly adhered to the Iranian ethnic character of Transoxiana before the tenth century, but later research made this assertion untenable. After the resolute rejection of this one-sided view by some Turkish scholars, it was R. N. Frye and A. M. Sayılı who advanced a balanced view concerning the gradual and peaceful infiltration of Turkic ethnic elements into Transoxiana and north-eastern Iran. It is quite evident that the Western Turks, after the foundation of the Turkic Empire in AD 552–5, immediately established contact with the Sogdians in Transoxiana, and there is clear evidence for the existence of Turkic settlements in Transoxiana also after the fall of the Western Turkic Empire (674), when the Türgesh confederacy took the upper hand in the region. The authors' conclusions are as follows:

- a) Turks were already in the regions of Khurasan and Transoxiana at the time of the Arab conquest, and remained there after the Arab domination. The Turkicization of these districts had, therefore, begun long before the Seljuqs.
- b) Turks were town and village dwellers except in regions where natural conditions imposed a nomadic life on them.
- c) They probably had a relatively large population in Central Asia and infiltrated in fairly large numbers into the Near East.<sup>4</sup>

Making use of Arabic and Chinese source material, Frye and Sayılı amply demonstrate that there are traces of early Turkic penetration not only in Khurasan and Transoxiana but also in Tokharistan, Badakhshan and Zabulistan (roughly corresponding with modern Afghanistan). Consequently, the Turkic presence in Afghanistan is much earlier than the emergence of the Ghaznavids in the tenth century. Turkic ethnic elements may also have arrived in Afghanistan with the Hepthalites, as early as the fifth century, so the Oghuz and Khalaj Turkic tribal groups must have been present in pre-Ghaznavid times.<sup>5</sup>

C. E. Bosworth later returned to this question, critically summarizing the results of modern research in two excellent articles.<sup>6</sup>

At this juncture, one must make mention of the equation – long popular in certain quarters – of Firdausī's *Tūrān* with the homeland of the Turks. Based on folk etymology (i.e. the ostensible similarity of the words *Tūrān* and *Türk*), this equation goes back to Firdausī himself, and survived him for many centuries. It was Tadeusz Kowalski, using the methods of modern scholarship, who pointed out that this equation was illusory. 'Turan' refers to the old nomadic enemies of Iran who lived on its north-eastern fringes, and the appellation itself has nothing to do with the name of the Turks, since in the ancient period when the Iranian heroic epic was formed, the Iranians could have had no direct contact with the Turkic nomads of Inner Asia.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, one cannot avoid the question: What prompted the early Turkic groups to appear in Transoxiana and further west in the Iranian world? There were two basic causes, both connected to the military character of the Turkic nomads. First, nomadic tribal groups had always been liable to lead raids and incursions into neighbouring sedentary territories. The sole aim of these raids was looting and acquiring booty. Large-scale military campaigns became possible only when the tribes were united under the leadership of a charismatic leader, and a nomadic realm (Turkic *il*) was founded. The first nomadic empire of the Turks in Inner Asia was founded in 552. Their western wing (division), the centre of which was in Jetisu (Semirech'e), conducted campaigns to Transoxiana, where the Sogdian towns were drawn under the suzerainty of the Western Turks. There is a dearth of information concerning the quantity and character of the settlements of the Turks in Transoxiana, but it seems safe to assume that the basically Iranian ethnic character of the region, especially in the urban areas, was long maintained in the Samanid period. Specifically, the Turks were employed mainly as mercenaries – warriors hired by the Sogdian city-states in their fight against the Muslim Arabic conquerors in the seventh century. Later, under the Abbasid caliphate, a special institution of military slavery emerged known in Arabic as *ghulām* (pl. *ghilmān*). The slave-soldiers were either obtained as war captives or purchased in the slave markets of Central Asia. Later the Samanids were instrumental in supplying the caliphate with the necessary quota of *ghulāms*, who came mainly from the Turkic tribes of Central Asia. From the beginning of the ninth century, the Turkic *ghulāms* were actively involved in the political struggles of the caliphate, and the Caliph al-Ma'mūn (r. 813–33) was the first to rely heavily on a private army consisting of Turkic slave-warriors. But it was al-Ma'mūn's brother and successor, the Caliph al-Mu'tasim (r. 833–42) who substantially built up the institution of military slavery, thereby endowing it with significant political power.<sup>8</sup> According to Nizām al-Mulk, 'They say [the Caliph al-Mu'tasim] had 70,000 Turkish pages; many of his pages he promoted and appointed to governorships. He always used to say there was none like the Turk for service.'<sup>9</sup>



Beginning in the ninth century, Turks and Persians were strictly distinguished as two distinct groups within the Islamic world. The Turks have ever since been regarded somewhat as latecomers to the Islamic world, with a touch of barbarity, but – thanks to their martial merits – indispensable for the defence of Islam. By the eleventh century certain clichés and commonplaces had established themselves, one of which was that the Turks were rude and successful soldiers, while the Persians were sophisticated city-dwellers. Both groups had their own rules and customs, and they had to be kept separate and prevented from mingling. Thus, in the eleventh century, Nizām al-Mulk, the great statesman of the Seljuqs in Iran, in characterizing periods of political and social upheaval, among numerous examples of misbehaviour and irregularity, offers the following: ‘Turks will adopt titles proper to civil dignitaries and the latter will take those belonging to Turks, while Turks and Taziks [i.e. Persians] alike will decorate themselves with titles of scholars and theologians.’ Or: ‘If a Turk keeps ten administrators, it will pass, and if one Tazik is administrator for ten Turks, it will be allowed.’<sup>10</sup>

Mahmūd Kāshgharī, the famous Turkic lexicographer of the eleventh century whose literary activity will be treated in more detail further below, gives a few Turkic proverbs that clearly indicate how the juxtaposition of Turks and Iranians and their mutual indispensability had become part of Turkic folk wisdom by that time. For instance, under the entry for the Turkic word *börk* (‘cap’, Arabic: *qalansuwa*), he cites the following proverb: *tatsüz türk bolmas, başsız börk bolmas* – ‘a Turk is never without a Persian, (just as) a cap is never without a head’.<sup>11</sup> This Turkic saying is particularly interesting, since it insists on the Turk’s need of the Persian, just as a cap gains its significance through the head, while implying no corresponding dependence of the Persian upon the Turk. It is an involuntary acknowledgement of the indigence of a nomad without the sedentary population.<sup>12</sup> The word *tat* – used throughout Kāshgharī’s *Dīvān* for ‘Persian’, instead of the more formal *fārsī* – is a very special one. Clauson correctly conjectured that in Old Turkic it might originally have meant ‘alien, probably in an inferior position like that of a subject’, hence the somewhat pejorative connotation the term has retained throughout its history.<sup>13</sup> Later, Kāshgharī remarks that he personally has heard from the Yaghma and Tukhsī – two Islamicized Turkic tribes of his time – that they called the ‘Uighur infidels’ *Tat*. The Uighurs were evidently Turcophones and Buddhists, so their appellation of *Tat* on the part of the Muslim Turks refers not to their Iranian character but to their inferior quality as Buddhists, i.e. ‘non-Muslim infidels’. Similarly, another Turkic proverb cited by Kāshgharī as *tatiğ közrā, tikānig tüprā* (‘strike) the Persian on the eye, (cut) the thorn at its root’ refers not to the Persians but to the pagan Uighurs. Kāshgharī himself cautions us to follow this path of interpretation when he says that the Uighurs lack loyalty, and that, ‘just as the thorn should be cut at its root, so the Uighur should be struck on the eye’.<sup>14</sup> In most cases the term *Tat* in the *Dīvān* refers to the

Uighur non-Muslims in a pejorative way, and derivatives of the word also acquired pejorative meanings: for example, *tatīq* – ‘to act like a Persian’; and *tatlaš* – ‘to jabber like the Persians and Uighurs’.<sup>15</sup>

### *The Case of the Ghaznavids and Seljuqs*

The Muslim institution of *ghulām* (military slavery), mentioned above, emerged in the Abbasid caliphate in the ninth century, and reached full blossom in the tenth century, especially in the central cities of Baghdad and Samarra and in the Samanid Emirate, the chief venue of the slave trade. By the latter part of the tenth century, Samanid rulers had entrusted the command of their army to Turkic generals who, as governors of vast provinces, acquired numerous military fiefdoms, and thereby accumulated great wealth. The almighty Turkic emirs gradually gained control of some of the provinces on their peripheries. The rise of Turkic warriors under the Samanids brought about structural changes that resulted in the loss of a great deal of the southern territories of the Samanid realm by the end of the turn of the (Christian) millennium. Turkic political ascendancy in the Samanid period in the tenth and eleventh centuries was the main cause of the fall of Samanid rule in Khurasan, and in what is now Afghanistan. A new dynasty emerged from within the Turkic military – the first ever Muslim ruling house to have its origin among the *ghulāms*. The Ghaznavids (989–1149) founded an empire in the eastern confines of the caliphate that could be compared only with that of the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad – of which the new capital, Ghazni, became in every respect a worthy rival.

Before a high-ranking Turkic *ghulām*, Sebük-tigin, rose to power in Ghazni, a number of Turkic governors represented the Samanid suzerainty in south-eastern Afghanistan. The commander-in-chief of the Samanids in Khurasan, Alp-tigin, was the first to try to secede from Samanid authority by conquering Ghazna and Zabulistan, but both he and his three successors – his son Abū Ishāq and the *ghulāms* Bilge-tigin and Böri-tigin – were reduced to the role of governor acting in Samanid interests in the area. The establishment of a polity independent of the Samanids thus still remained out of the question in 977, when Sebük-tigin was raised to power by the Turkic military.<sup>16</sup>

Sebük-tigin was evidently of Turkic origin; according to the *Pand-nāma*<sup>17</sup> he was descended from the Turkic Barsghan tribe – its name, according to Kāshgharī, also being that of a city on the shores of the Lake Issyk-köl, whence the author’s father also descended.<sup>18</sup> The anonymous Persian geographical work, the *Hudūd al-‘Ālam*, states that the town belonged to the land of the Qarluq and that its prince was also Qarluq, though its inhabitants ‘are devoted to the Toghuzghuz (*havā-yi T. khwāhand*)’.<sup>19</sup> Bosworth notes that ‘it is a curious point that both the Ghaznavids and their rivals the Qarakhanids may have sprung from the same Turkish people’.<sup>20</sup> Though the origins of both Kāshgharī’s and Sebük-tigin’s fathers really go back to the Qarluq of the Jetisu

(Semirech'e) region, I think it is no more than a coincidence, and thus one cannot draw any far-reaching conclusions from it. The ethnic composition of the *ghulāms* in Khurasan and Zabulistan must have been variegated, consisting of representatives of different tribes and clans from Jetisu and the steppe region beyond the Syr-Darya river.

Later Ghaznavid genealogists connected Sebük-tigin's origins to Yazdagird III, the last Sasanian emperor. In doing so they simply followed the example of the Samanids, Buyids and Ziyarids, whose court genealogists tried to connect the relevant dynasties to the Persianate world by compiling fictive genealogies for them. The now lost *Ta'rikh-i mujadwal* of Abū'l-Qāsim Muhammad b. 'Alī 'Imādī (dated by W. Barthold to the early twelfth century<sup>21</sup>) contains a complete genealogy tracing Sebük-tigin's origins to Yazdagird III. But one must admit that, in sharp contrast to the later genealogies, the earlier ones always fully acknowledge the lineage of Sebük-tigin's son, Mahmūd Ghaznavī.<sup>22</sup>

Sebük-tigin's story clearly demonstrates the process of enslavement in Central Asia. As a boy of 12 living within the bounds of one of the Qarluq tribes in the vicinity of Barghan, near the Issyk-köl, he was captured by another Qarluq tribe, the Tukhsi (or Tukhsiyan), which had its camps near the Chu River. He was then sold in the slave market of Chāch to a slave-dealer who directed him to Nakhshab, where he underwent thorough military training. Finally, he was purchased in Nishapur to be a member of Hājib Alp-tigin's guard. Under the tutelage of Alp-tigin he began a steep ascent of the career ladder, since his patron discovered his extraordinary talent in military matters and organization. By the age of 18 he had over 200 *ghulām*-warriors under his authority. When Alp-tigin marched over to Ghazni, Sebük-tigin was in his retinue, and under Abū Ishāq's governorship we see him as commander of the army of Ghazni. His authority was also on the rise in the time of Bilge-tigin and Böri-tigin – and finally, in 977, the Turkic military chose him to be their commander, and the Samanids acknowledged him as their governor in Zabulistan and Khorasan. Sebük-tigin and his son Mahmūd, born to the daughter of an aristocrat in Zabulistan, remained loyal to the Samanids throughout Sebük-tigin's lifetime.<sup>23</sup>

Sebük-tigin's mother tongue was evidently Turkic. Probably his son Mahmūd also spoke Turkic from childhood, and also acquired a good Muslim training: he achieved equal mastery of both the Arabic and Persian languages. His son Mas'ūd, in addition to Turkic and Persian, was very good at Arabic. Bayhaqī himself relates that Mas'ūd sometimes prepared the drafts of state documents; the historian possessed some of these rough drafts. The Ghaznavid sultans' mastery of Arabic and Persian, and their refined and sophisticated erudition in Muslim literature (*adab*), contrast sharply with the philistinism ('untutoredness') of the later Seljuq rulers. Those *ghulāms* who stood in the sultan's service for long must have known Persian – especially those of higher

rank, who were in closer contact with members of the civil bureaucracy. Soldiers of the lower rank, recruited from ever-renewed waves of Central Asian Turkic slave soldiers, must have spoken only their own Turkic mother tongue. Both Mahmūd and Mas'ūd must have had contact with their soldiers in their ancestral (mainly paternal) language.<sup>24</sup>

The first two Ghaznavid sultans Mahmūd and Mas'ūd, like many Muslim rulers of the time, were generous patrons of letters, although some scholars expressed a certain displeasure with Mahmūd's style of obtaining the services of the famous literati of the age: E. G. Browne, for instance, suggests that he should be regarded as less a 'great patron' than a 'great kidnapper', since he practically deported the literary and artistic celebrities of the period to settle and work in Ghazni. Nonetheless, it is generally recognized that Ghaznavid rule in the first half of the eleventh century was one of the high points of Persian culture, marked by the birth of the eternal pride of Persian culture, Firdausī's *Shāhnāma*.

In contrast with the remnants of Arabic and Persian high culture, practically no traces of the popular, oral culture of the Turks have come down to us. The use of Turkish language and folk traditions was restricted to military and private household circles, and there are only a few hints in written sources that the Turks had an oral folk poetry, none of which has been preserved.<sup>25</sup> The creation of an Islamic Turkic *adab* in written form was not on the agenda in the Ghaznavid period.

Finally, one may pose the question: Why might it be that neither the Ghaznavids nor the Seljuqs deemed it necessary to create a Turkic *adab* based on Islamic values? The answer can only be tentative, but one cannot resist the temptation to attribute their lack of interest in creating their own written culture to their social and cultural status within the Islamic world. For the first 300 years of Islam the Turks were mainly outsiders who earned their fame as skilled warriors who could be employed as slaves and mercenary soldiers. By the tenth century they had become renowned for their excellence in the techniques of war and martial art throughout the caliphate. The thin upper layer of *ghulāms* who furnished the leaders of the armies readily assimilated as individuals by embracing Islam and its culture. Since they were thereby raised from the inferior social status of slaves, they wanted to assimilate completely, as is very often the case with the first generation of assimilants, and happily abandoned their former nomadic and Turkic identity.

This theory may hold true for the Ghaznavids, but cannot be applied to the Seljuqs, who were no mercenaries of the Islamic world, but inundated the Iranian world en masse, in their tribal and clan units. In their case, presumably it was their social backwardness that hindered their appreciation of their own culture. After the embracing of Islam and conquering the northern part of the Iranian world, the prestige of the Arabic and Persian culture was unquestionable for them – and the Seljuq rulers, in both Iran and Anatolia,

made no efforts to develop a high literature in their native language. From the tenth to the thirteenth centuries there were sharp functional distinctions between these three languages. Arabic was the holy language of the Qur'ān, and consequently became the language of theology, scholarship and science; Persian was the language of state administration and high literature; Turkic was the language of the Turkic ruling elites, the tribesmen, and the soldiers. Until the thirteenth century, there was no connection between Persian written literature and Turkic oral literature; the two existed separately, the latter being considered much less valuable even by Turkic native speakers. One may say that, for more than two centuries, the Seljuqs and the Oghuz Turks had an inferiority complex in relation to the Persianate culture.

### *The Case of the Qarakhanids: Creation of a Turkic Adab*

We may now turn our attention to the Qarakhanids, who, though they wholeheartedly embraced the Persianate culture of the conquered land of Transoxiana, made decisive strides towards creating their own version of Turco-Islamic culture. Their role was as pioneering for the Muslim Turkic world as that of the Samanids was for the Perso-Islamic world. They traced their ancestry to the legendary Tonga Alp Er, though he was identified with the Iranian Afrāsiyāb. But, having imbibed Persianate culture, they set out at once to create the Turkic version of Islamic culture. In early Turco-Islamic culture, Yūsuf Balasaghūnī's lengthy didactic poem, the *Qutadghu Bilig* ('Royal Wisdom', 1069) and Mahmūd Kāshgharī's encyclopaedic compendium, the *Dīwān lughāt al-Turk* (1077), stand out as lonely beacons. The focus of this part of the chapter is to elucidate the other, Qarakhanid answer to the Islamic challenge – namely, how the creation of a Turkic *adab* came about.

Dankoff argues that, in the creation of a Turkic *adab*, 'we can see three outstanding elements in the Arab and Iranian *adabs* that served as models for the Turkic. These are, first, the mastery of the language; second, the transmission of profane wisdom, particularly as attached to the royal courts; and third, pride in the national legends, customs and traditions.'<sup>26</sup> Let us begin with the first of these: the 'mastery of language'.

### *'Turkicness' (language and folklore) as value*

Qarakhanid Turkic literacy sprang almost from nothing in the 1070s.<sup>27</sup> In fact, two masterworks stand as its fountainheads, both products of conscious, creative minds. Mahmūd Kāshgharī's *Dīwān lughāt al-Turk* is a work of Arabic-language scholarship, composed by its Turkic author in Baghdad.<sup>28</sup> Its primary aim, in addition to creating a solid scholarly description of the language, ethnography and folklore of the Turks, was to prove that the language and traditions of the Turks were compatible with Islamic values, so that the Turks might be regarded as new, valuable and full-fledged members of the Islamic community:

When I saw that God Most High had caused the Sun of Fortune to rise in the Zodiac of the Turks, and set their Kingdom among the spheres of Heaven; that He called them 'Turk,' and gave them the Rule; making them kings of the Age, and placing in their hands the reins of temporal authority ... every man of reason must attach himself to them, or else expose himself to their falling arrows. And there is no better way to approach them than by speaking their own tongue thereby bending their ear and inclining their heart.

So, 'He called them "Turk," and gave them the Rule'.<sup>29</sup> It is as if we heard a Turkic variant of the Roman vocation immortalized by Virgil: *tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento / (hae tibi erunt artes)* – 'But you, Roman, remember to rule the peoples with power (these will be your arts) ...'.<sup>30</sup> Kāshgharī's arguments are particularly remarkable: Allah himself gave the Turks their name and destined them to rule over peoples. Consequently, military success is an evident sign of God's favour, and the Turks are duly rich in the martial virtues. The Turks are good Muslims because they are successful conquerors; this would be impossible without Allah's consent and support. So the Turks secured their firm place within the Islamic universe through their military prowess. Kāshgharī later repeats that it was God who gave them their name: '*Türk*. Name of the son of Noah, God's blessings be upon him. This is the name by which God called the sons of Turk son of Noah ...'.<sup>31</sup> He then refers to two authentic traditions (*hadīth*) handed down to him by two imams (one from Bukhara, the other one from Nishapur). The Prophet, speaking of the Oghuz Turks, said: "'Learn the *tongue of the Turks*, for their reign will be long ...'" Now if this Hadith is sound ... then learning it is a religious duty; and if it is not sound, still Wisdom demands it'.<sup>32</sup>

In short, Kāshgharī was an inspired advocate of the 'Turkish cause' in the early Islamic world, though it seems to me somewhat exaggerated to state, as Dankoff does, that 'he was convinced of the supremacy of the Turks in God's design'.<sup>33</sup> At best, he can be identified as the first emancipator of the Turks in the Islamic world.

Kāshgharī thus laid the ideological foundations for creating a Turkic *adab* – a task realized by Yūsuf Balasaghūnī, in his monumental work, the *Qutadghu Bilig*. With its 6,645 couplets (13,290 lines), it is a feast of the Turkish language; its very existence is ostentatious proof that the Turkish language is a more than befitting tool for writing Islamic literature.<sup>34</sup> In addition, when the author appeals to authority, which is a characteristic feature of Islamic mirrors for princes, he does so without exception using Turkic examples: the wise sayings of *khans*, *begs*, *yabghus*, *buyruqs* and other dignitaries and heroes of Old Turkic times are the main points of reference in his treasure-house of authorities evidently taken from Turkic folklore.<sup>35</sup>

*Incorporation of the Turks into the Islamic and Persian Universe:  
Türk as Noah's Son and Afrāsiyāb as Tonga Alp Er*

In both Christian and Islamic contexts all peoples of the earth were incorporated into Noah's genealogy: each nation was allotted one of Noah's three sons as its progenitor. The most numerous group was certainly the one containing the descendants of Noah's third son, Japheth. Although he is not mentioned by name in the Qur'ān, he is referred to indirectly in the narrative of Noah (Qur'ān VII: 64; X: 73; XI: 40; XXIII: 27; XXVI: 119). Japheth is usually regarded as the ancestor of the nomadic peoples, including also the Turks and Khazars. As we have seen, Türk became the eponymous forefather of the Turks in Kāshgharī's interpretation, and thus was understood to be the son of Noah: 'Türk. Name of the son of Noah, God's blessings be upon him. This is the name by which God called the sons of Turk son of Noah ...'.<sup>36</sup> As Noah's descendants, the Turks are thus full members of the family of nations.

Just as they had to be integrated into Islamic tradition, the Turks also had to find a secure place in the Iranian world. Afrāsiyāb was the appropriate person to whom the Turks could be connected: he was the legendary hero of the Iranian epic, immortalized in the *Shāhnāma* as commander of Turan, the great enemy of Iran.<sup>37</sup> Tonga Alp Er, a legendary hero of an Old Turkic epic, was the suitable figure to equate with Afrāsiyāb; thus the Turks became connected to the Iranians. Both Kāshgharī and Yūsuf Balasaghūnī clearly identify both persons. Kāshgharī claims that they were one and the same person when he says: 'Tonga alp ār – who is Afrāsiyāb – built the city of Marv';<sup>38</sup> and, elsewhere: 'King Afrāsiyāb, chief of the Turks, had the title: *tonga alp ār* meaning "a man, a warrior, [as strong as] a tiger"'.<sup>39</sup> Yet elsewhere he states that 'Kāšyar is called: *ordu känd*, meaning "city of residence (*balad al-iqāma*)", since Afrāsiyāb used to reside there because of its fine air; it is Lower Sīn'.<sup>40</sup> The *Qutadghu Bilig* contains the following passage (lines 276–82):

If you observe well you will notice that the Turkish princes are the finest in the world. And among these Turkish princes the one of outstanding fame and glory was *Tonga Alp Er*. He was the choicest of men, distinguished by great wisdom and virtues manifold. What a choice and manly man he was, a clever man indeed – he devoured this world entire! The Iranians call him Afrasiyab, the same who seized and pillaged their realm ... The Iranians have written this all down in books – and who could understand it if it were not written down?<sup>41</sup>

The mention of the Persian texts (line 282: *tāzīklār bitigdā bitimiš muni*) evidently refers to the *Shāhnāma*.

Kāshgharī gives further interesting details concerning the Turkic variant of the Afrāsiyāb legend. According to his sources, Afrāsiyāb had a daughter named Qāz, and Kāshgharī (or his source?) does not hesitate to connect this name with that of the town of Qazvīn, and to offer an ad hoc Turkic folk etymology of the town Qum.<sup>42</sup>

In his strenuous effort to connect as closely as possible the Turkic and Iranian pasts, he comes to the provocative conclusion that Transoxiana is part of the Turkic lands. When mentioning the towns Baykänd, Sämizkänd, Taškänd, Özkänd and Tunkänd, he adds: ‘the names of all these cities are Turkic; *känd* in Turkic is “city (*balda*)” ... when the Persians began to multiply in them they became like Iranian cities (*bilād al-‘ajam*)’.<sup>43</sup> So Kāshgharī, in his national fervour, turns the real historical process upside-down, and makes the Turks the autochthonous population of Transoxiana.

Finally, I cannot refrain from a remark concerning the process of making Turkic mythology ‘compatible’ with the Iranian. It is remarkable that the Turks happily adopted the role of villain in Iranian mythology, and identified themselves with Turan and its chief, Afrāsiyāb, arch-enemy of Iran. Something similar happened to the Hungarians in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Having embraced Christianity in AD 1000, the Hungarian and European literati had to find for the newcomers a place in the Christian, European community of nations. Drawing on the structural similarities of the Eurasian nomads, and considering that the Hungarians occupied the Carpathian Basin, an area once conquered by the Huns and the Avars, chroniclers opted to portray the Hungarians as kinsmen of the Huns. And the Hungarian nobility readily identified themselves with Attila’s ‘barbarous’ nation of the Huns, just as the Turks did in identifying themselves with Afrāsiyāb’s Turanian barbarians.<sup>44</sup>

### *The ‘Mirror for Princes’ Genre*

In addition to being the first Islamo-Turkic work that absorbed elements of Turkic folklore, the *Qutadghu Bilig* can be identified chiefly as a didactic poem perfectly fitting the ‘Mirror for Princes’ genre. The genre has a long history, deriving from the ancient Near East, China, India, and, through Greco-Roman antiquity, reached the Islamic Near East and medieval Europe. Its Sasanian antecedents are of special interest here, since they found their way into the new Perso-Islamic synthesis. The essence of Sasanian ideology was the good administration of the country under the leadership of a legitimate and righteous ruler safeguarding Zoroastrianism as the state religion. The most famous Sasanian ruler, Khusrau I Anushirvan (r. sixth century AD), became the model of a just ruler also for Muslims, and he and his legendary vizier Bozorgmihr are the chief protagonists of the *Pand-nāmag* (‘Book of Counsel’), known from a ninth-century Pahlavi version that was later translated into Arabic. The Indian royal tradition also found its way to Iran, as reflected in a book titled *Kalīla wa Dimnag*, a translation of the Indian *Pañchatantra*. The renowned Abbasid vizier Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (eighth century AD) did a great deal to create tracts of *adab* ‘etiquette’, in which the whole Sasanian royal ideology was incorporated and creatively combined with Islamic principles. By the eleventh century, the ‘Mirror for Princes’ thus became a well-known discrete literary genre in the Islamic world, with numerous treatises written in both Arabic and Persian.<sup>45</sup>



When Yūsuf Balasaghūnī embarked on his task, the greatest novelty of his work was that he attempted to create a Turkic-language work in a genre alien to the Turks. But language was not the only difficulty he had to cope with. He tried to combine the Irano-Islamic traditions of government and political-moral wisdom with the Turkic state traditions originating in Inner Asia.

Apart from a few minor works written in Arabic,<sup>46</sup> the best-known examples of the genre emerged in Persian. The first such work was the *Qābus-nāma*, written in 1082 by the prince of the Ziyarid dynasty of northern Iran.<sup>47</sup> It was followed soon after by the *Siyāsat-nāma*, or 'Book of Government', written about 1090 by Nizām al-Mulk, the famous vizier to the Seljuq sultans. This was an administrative handbook, containing valuable recommendations on how the realm should be governed.<sup>48</sup> Finally, the great al-Ghazālī also contributed to this genre with his *Nasīhat al-Mulūk*, or 'Book of Counsel for Kings', written in 1111.<sup>49</sup>

The *Qutadghu Bilig* is exactly contemporaneous with this period of the Arabic and Persian 'Mirror for Princes' genre. Moreover, as we have seen, it predates by decades the most important works – the *Qābus-nāma*, the *Siyāsat-nāma* and the *Nasīhat al-Mulūk*. Its pioneering role and literary excellence notwithstanding, it was later practically forgotten, and exerted no impact on later works in the genre. This oblivion is a striking fact that requires explanation.

In my view, there are at least two factors that may be responsible for the evanescent success of the *Qutadghu Bilig*. The first is the fact of its composition in Turkic. Turkic literary works, even in the later Chagatay and Ottoman periods, had no direct influence on Persian literature. Turkic-Persian literary contacts persisted for centuries in one direction only: Turkic poetry followed Persian models. Even such giants of Turkic literature as Navā'ī could exert no influence on Persian poetry. So the *Qutadghu Bilig* may have influenced only the nascent Turko-Islamic literature. But here, too, Yūsuf Balasaghūnī's work brought no breakthrough. Those literati who knew Arabo-Islamic and Perso-Islamic literatures did not appreciate the Turkic character of the work (sometimes maybe out of mere snobbery), while the Turkic layers of society were not yet sufficiently well versed in Islamic *adab* to be able to appreciate Yūsuf's achievement, and they found more pleasure in listening to Turkic epic and poetry in oral form. Dankoff is absolutely right in stating that:

Yusuf of Balasaghun attempted, with some measure of success, to establish the Central Asiatic Turkic tradition as a legitimate element within the parameters of Islamic culture, just as his counterparts from Ibn al-Muqaffa' to Firdausī had done for the Iranian tradition. But unlike Firdausī, Yūsuf took as his starting point, not the sagas and epics that were current at his time, but rather the heritage of 'royal wisdom' (*qutadghu bilig*) preserved in Qarakhanid ruling circles, which he tried to amalgamate with the Irano-Islamic ideals of statecraft preserved in Arabic and Persian *adab*.<sup>50</sup>

### *Continuity and Discontinuity with Uighur Literacy*

When Kāshgharī and Yūsuf Balasaghūnī set out to lay down the foundations of a Turco-Islamic *adab*, they were relatively relaxed about which alphabet to use in writing their works. Throughout the Islamic world, the Arabic alphabet entertained a universal authority through its status as the sacred script of the Holy Qur'ān. Each new nation embracing Islam adopted the Arabic script for its national languages, whether or not it had previously used another alphabet. Although Middle Persian was written in the Pahlavi script for centuries, from the ninth century, after the conversion to Islam, the Persians began to write their New Persian language in the Arabic script. In selecting a writing tool for the Turco-Islamic *adab*, the only choice would have been the Arabic script. But the Turkic languages had their own literacy and alphabets prior to the eleventh century: the Turks of Orkhon and the Uighurs used the so-called runic script from the seventh to the ninth centuries, and from the ninth century onwards the Uighurs of Kansu and Turkestan used several alphabets of Aramaic origin, the most important of which was their own 'Uighur' alphabet.

For Kāshgharī and Yūsuf Balasaghūnī, however, the changeover to the Arabic script was unavoidable – though there is no question that both of them knew the Uighur alphabet and literature. At the beginning of his work Kāshgharī provides a rather detailed description of the Uighur script, which he calls 'Turkic script'. He then concludes: 'This is the script used for all documents and correspondence of the Khāqāns and the Sultans, from ancient times to the present, and from Kāshgar to Upper Sīn, encompassing all the lands of the Turks.'<sup>51</sup> Kāshgharī's work became known to the scholarly community rather late (only at the beginning of the twentieth century), while the Vienna manuscript of the *Qutadghu Bilig* – for a long time the only one known to exist – was written in the Uighur script. It is a rather late manuscript from the Timurid period (fifteenth century), and the use of the Uighur alphabet can be ascribed to its general revival as part of the Mongol heritage of the Timurids.<sup>52</sup> This fact led early Turcology to the illusion that the *Qutadghu Bilig* was an Uighur literary work, with both Vámbéry and Radloff labelling it a Uighur monument.<sup>53</sup> Later, Kāshgharī's first edition (1914–17) and the discovery of two manuscripts of the *Qutadghu Bilig* written in the Arabic script (the Cairo and Namangan manuscripts) made possible the separation of these Qarakhanid works from the works of Uighur literacy.<sup>54</sup>

But the same wholly obsolete view was revived – as if nothing had happened in Turcology during the century or so since the work of Vámbéry and Radloff – by Tang Li<sup>55</sup> and several Chinese researchers. The identification of Qarakhanid culture with both the ancient and modern Uighur cultures – as if a direct line of development had existed from the Old Uighur literature of Turkestan, through the Qarakhanid Islamo-Turkic period, and up to the post-Mongol Chagatay literary era of Chinese Turkestan – is a crude simplification of linguistic, literary and historical facts. Chinese scholars have evident

political motives in straining to prove a continuity between the Old and Modern Uighur cultures in Chinese Turkestan. Tang Li's work is a very weak, haphazard compendium on this topic, written without a knowledge of the results of modern Western scholarship. For him, Kāshgharī's *Dīvān* and the *Qutadghu Bilig* signify 'the beginnings of Uighur Islamic Culture'. To speak of a 'Uighur Islamic culture' before the twentieth century is, at least, anachronistic and misleading: the Muslims of Chinese Turkestan had never styled themselves 'Uighur' prior to 1923!

Although the use of Arabic script in the first works of Qarakhanid literature seems to be undisputed, certain influences of Uighur literary traditions on the nascent Qarakhanid literature cannot be denied. Uighur literacy has long coexisted with Arab writing: the so-called Yarkand documents testify to the fact that, towards the end of the eleventh century, in addition to Arabic documents, Turkic juridical documents were also written in both Arabic and Uighur scripts.<sup>56</sup> Turcologists have long noticed that, in Qarakhanid texts, as also in later Khoresmian and Chaghatay texts, the *plene* script for all (short or long) vowels was customary, while a number of other extant orthographic characteristics can be ascribed to the direct influence of Uighur orthography.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the first Qarakhanid works written in Arabic script implemented the orthography of Uighur Turkic works.

Once the question of alphabets is elucidated, a few words are in order on the language of Qarakhanid literacy. To what extent is it Turkic and/or Uighur? The latter term can be excluded at once, since neither Kāshgharī nor Yūsuf Balasaghūnī call the language spoken in the Qarakhanid realm 'Uighur'. In the non-Muslim city-states of eastern Turkestan, Uighur was spoken and written. But for the language spoken in Kashghar and Khotan, in Semirech'e and Transoxiana, one cannot use the term 'Uighur'. The authors themselves call the new Islamic literary language simply 'Turkic' (*Türk tili*, *Türkçe*), or the 'language of Kashgar' (*Kāshghar tili*), since the spoken Turkic language of the religious and administrative centre, Kashghar, lays the foundations for the creation of the new Islamic written language. For example, though Edib Ahmad Yüknēkī, author of the *'Atabatul-haqāyiq*, the second-oldest (twelfth-century) Islamo-Turkic literary work after the *Qutadghu Bilig*, came from Transoxiana, he wrote his work 'in the dialect of Kāshghar'.<sup>58</sup>

Though Kāshgharī's *Dictionary* and Yūsuf Hāss Hājib's *Qutadghu Bilig* were path-breaking enterprises in creating a Turco-Islamic literacy (*adab*), they each proved fruitless for the further development of Turkic literature, which followed different paths. Qarakhanid Turkic literacy was unable to take deep root, and Eastern Turkish (Khorezmian and Chagatay) literacy, like its Western Turkish (Seljuq and Ottoman) counterpart in the following centuries, was not a direct successor of Qarakhanid literacy. Seemingly, the assimilation of the newly acquired Perso-Islamic identity and the creation of a brand-new Turco-Islamic culture exceeded the Qarakhanids' capacities; they were unable to pay

sufficient attention to the promotion of Persian *adab*, and this may be the main reason why 'a period of cultural retrogression' (W. Barthold) came about during Qarakhanid rule in Transoxiana.

Finally, a rudimentary attempt might be made to find an explanation for the two different styles of acculturation of the Ghaznavids (and Seljuqs) and the Qarakhanids. Several causes (sometimes only speculative) can be enumerated, the combined effect of which may have resulted in two different answers to the Islamic challenge:

1. The differing numbers of Turkic immigrants in the Persianate world. The territories that fell under Ghaznavid and Seljuq suzerainty, though containing earlier Turkic settlements, were ethnically more Iranian than the Qarakhanid territories. The picture in Transoxiana is a matter for debate; but Semirech'e and the region of Kashghar and Khotan were preponderantly Turkic by the eleventh century.
2. The varying circumstances of Turkic infiltration in the different regions. The Ghaznavids were military slaves, a small section of a basically Iranian world who – though they became rulers – always had to bear the stigma of their original low birth and inferior social status. Naturally enough, they wanted to assimilate into the Islamic world and forget their paternal, nomadic traditions. The Seljuqs were tribal conquerors without the experience of a nomadic empire that the Turkish Empire represented. Their chief aim was thus also to assimilate to Persianate culture. The Qarakhanids, on the other hand, were Turkic conquerors consisting of Qarluq, Chigil, Yaghma and other tribal elements. Through the Qarluq element, they preserved the Turkic imperial tradition of a nomadic empire. Maybe that is why they were not mere conquerors, but wanted to add their own Turkic constituent to the basically Arabo-Iranian Islamic culture.
3. Though the new Turkic culture of the Qarakhanids cannot be identified as Uighur, the presence of Uighur literacy (whether in its Manichaean, Nestorian or Buddhist forms) in eastern Turkestan from the mid eighth century may have been instrumental in yielding a Turkic cultural pattern for the Muslim Turks of Central Asia. The Uighur orthography of the new Turkic Qarakhanid literary culture is an aspect of this pattern.

Nevertheless, Qarakhanid Turkic literary culture was supplanted after the Mongol conquests of the thirteenth century, by both its Eastern Turkic (Khorezmian and Chagatay) and Western Turkic (Ottoman and Azeri) competitors. An explanation of this equally interesting phenomenon would be the task of a separate treatise.

## Notes:

1. R. N. Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia* (London, 1989), p. 236.
2. See Robert L. Canfield, ed., *Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, 1991); Éva M. Jeremiás, ed., *Irano-Turkic Cultural Contacts in the 11th–17th Centuries*, Acta et Studia 1 (Piliscsaba, 2002); Lars Johanson and Christiane Bulut, eds, *Turkic–Iranian Contact Areas: Historical and Linguistic Aspects* (Wiesbaden, 2006). For a good survey of the Turco-Mongol impact, see Yuri Bregel, ‘Turco-Mongol influences in Central Asia’, in Canfield, *Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective*, pp. 53–77.
3. Yusuf Khass Hajib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory* (Kutadgu Bilig), *A Turko-Islamic Mirror for Princes*, transl. Robert Dankoff, Publications of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies 16 (Chicago/London, 1983), p. 2.
4. R. N. Frye and M.S. Sayili, ‘Turks in the Middle East before the Seljuqs’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 63 (1943), pp. 194–207, at p. 195 (also in C. E. Bosworth, ed., *The Turks in the Early Islamic World: The Formation of the Classical Islamic World* 9 [Aldershot, Hants/Burlington, VT, 2007], pp. 179–92, at p. 180).
5. On this see also C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran 994–1040* (New Delhi, 1992 [1963]), pp. 35–6.
6. C. E. Bosworth, ‘The Turks in the Islamic Lands up to the Mid-11th Century’, in C. Cahen, ed., *Philologiae Turicae Fundamenta*, III (Wiesbaden, 1970), pp. 1–20 (also in Bosworth, *Turks in the Early Islamic World*, pp. 193–212); C. E. Bosworth, ‘Barbarian Incursions: The Coming of the Turks into the Islamic World’, in D. S. Richard, ed., *Islamic Civilisation 950–1150* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 1–16 (also in Bosworth, *Turks in the Early Islamic World*, pp. 213–28).
7. Tadeusz Kowalski, ‘The Turks in the Shāh-nāma’, in Bosworth, *Turks in the Early Islamic World*, pp. 121–34 (first published in French as ‘Les Turcs dans le Shāh-nāme’, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 15 [1939–49], pp. 84–99).
8. For the institution of *ghulāms*, with further literature, see H. Töllner, *Die türkischen Garden am Kalifenhof vom Samarra: Beiträge zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte des Orients* 21 (Walldorf-Hessen, 1971); Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (New York, 1980); Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System* (London, 1981); Matthew S. Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: A History of the Turkish Military of Samarra (A.H. 200–275/815–889 CE)* (Albany, 2001); Peter B. Golden, ‘Khazar Turkic Ghulāms in Caliphal Service’, *Journal Asiatique* 292 (2004), pp. 279–309 (also in Bosworth, *Turks in the Early Islamic World*, pp. 135–65).
9. Hubert Darke, transl., *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyar al-Muluk or Siyasat-nama of Nizam al-Mulk* (Richmond, 2002 [1960]), p. 60. Al-Mu‘tasim’s praise of the Turks may be partly due to the fact that he himself was of Turkic origin on his maternal side, although this has not been satisfactorily demonstrated (see Töllner, *Die türkischen Garden*, pp. 20–1).
10. Darke, transl., *Book of Government*, p. 139.
11. Robert Dankoff, in collaboration with James Kelly, ed. and transl., Mahmūd al-Kāshyārī, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects (Dīwān Lughāt at-Turk)*, 3 vols (Harvard University Printing Office, 1982–85), I, p. 176. Practically the same proverb is repeated under the heading *tat* (ibid., II, p. 407).
12. M. E. Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, in B. F. Manz, ed., *Central Asia in Historical Perspective* (Boulder, CO/Oxford, 1994), pp. 45–61, at p. 48.

13. Sir Gerard Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish* (Oxford, 1972), 449.
14. al-Kāšyarī, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, ed. R. Dankoff, II, pp. 406–7. See also Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary*, p. 449.
15. For the Uighurs as infidels, see al-Kāšyarī, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, ed. R. Dankoff, I, pp. 30, 243, and II, p. 413; for *tatīq*:- see *ibid.*, II, p. 327; *tatlaš*:- *ibid.*, II, p. 370.
16. Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, pp. 37–9.
17. M. Nazim, ‘The *Pand-Nāmah* of Subuktigīn’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3 (1933), pp. 605–28.
18. al-Kāšyarī, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, ed. R. Dankoff, II, p. 625.
19. Vladimir Minorsky, ed. and transl., *Hudūd al-‘Ālam*, ‘The Regions of the World’: *A Persian Geography 372 AH–982 AD*, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, New Series 11 (London, 1937), p. 98.
20. Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, p. 39.
21. W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, New Series 5 (London, 1928), p. 24.
22. Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, p. 40.
23. Zeki Velidī Togan, *Umumī Türk tarihi’ne giriş* (Istanbul, 1981 [1946]), p. 152; Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, pp. 40–1.
24. Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, pp. 129–30.
25. Mehmed Fuad Köprülüzade, in his ‘Gazneliler devrinde Türk si’ri’, in Mehmed Fuad Köprülüzade, *Türk dili ve edebiyatı hakkında araştırmalar* (Istanbul, 1934), pp. 26–32, analyses a couplet (*bayt*) of Manūchihri, Persian poet of Mas‘ūd Ghaznavī’s court, in which the poet refers to a person who can recite Turkic and Oghuz verses (*ši’r-i turkī, ši’r-i ghuzzī*). See A. de Biberstein-Kazimirsky, *Menoutchehri, poète persan du onzième siècle* (Paris, 1887), pp. 148, 261, 395. Köprülüzade grossly exaggerates the significance of Manūchihri’s *bayt*, on the basis of which he erroneously infers the existence of a written literature in Turkic during the early Ghaznavid period.
26. Robert Dankoff, ‘Qarakhanid Literature and the Beginnings of Turco-Islamic Culture’, in Hasan B. Paksoy, ed., *Central Asian Monuments* (Istanbul, 1992), pp. 73–80, at p. 74.
27. For an overview of Qarakhanid literary culture, see Ahmet Caferoğlu, ‘La littérature turque de l’époque des Karakhanides’, in Louis Bazin, Pertev Naili Boratav, Alessio Bombaci, Tayyib Gökbilgin, Fahir İz, eds, *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta* II (Wiesbaden, 1964), pp. 267–75.
28. For Kāshgharī and the editions of his work, see Mecdut Mansuroğlu, ‘Das Karakhanidische’, in Jean Deny, Kaare Grønbech, Helmuth Scheel, Zeki Velidī Togan, eds, *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, I (Wiesbaden, 1959), pp. 87–108, at p. 88. For the latest and best English translation, see al-Kāšyarī, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, 3 vols (see note 11, above).
29. al-Kāšyarī, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, ed. R. Dankoff, I, p. 2.
30. Publius Vergilius Maro, *Aeneid*, VI, lines 851–2, available at the [latinlibrary.com](http://latinlibrary.com).
31. al-Kāšyarī, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, ed. R. Dankoff, I, p. 176.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
33. Dankoff, ‘Qarakhanid Literature and the Beginnings of Turco-Islamic Culture’, p. 77.

34. For the best edition of the *Qutadghu Bilig*, together with a Turkish translation and index, see Reşid Rahmeti Arat, ed., *Kutadgu Bilig I: Metin* (Ankara, 1991 [1947]); II: *Çeviri* (Ankara, 1985 [1959]); III: *İndeks* (Istanbul, 1979). For the English translation, see Yusuf Khass Hajib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory* (tr. R. Dankoff). Some of the major contributions from among the ample literature concerning the Qutadghu Bilig include: A. Bombaci, 'Kutadgu Bilig hakkında bazı mülâhazalar', in *Fuad Köprülü Armağanı/Mélanges Fuad Köprülü* (Istanbul, 1953), pp. 65–75; H. İnalcık, 'Kutadgu Bilig'de Türk ve İran siyaset nazariye ve gelenekleri', in *Reşid Rahmeti Arat İçin* (Ankara, 1966), pp. 259–71; İ. Kafesoğlu, *Kutadgu Bilig ve Kültür Tarihimizdeki Yeri* (Ankara, 1980); A. N. Kononov, 'Slovo o Iusufe iz Balasaguna i ego poëme "Kutadgu Bilig"', *Sovetskaia Tiurkologiia* 4 (1970), pp. 3–12.
35. For a relatively complete list of these references, see Yusuf Khass Hajib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory*, transl. R. Dankoff, p. 9. See also Robert Dankoff, 'Inner Asian Wisdom Traditions in the Pre-Mongol Period', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101: 1 (1981), pp. 87–95.
36. al-Kāşyarī, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, ed. R. Dankoff, I, p. 176.
37. For *Afrāsiyāb*, see M. Mansuroğlu, 'Efrāsiyāb', in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1988) 4, pp. 192–3; T. Yazıcı, 'Efrāsiyāb', in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1994), 10, p. 479; E. Yarshater, 'Afrāsiyāb', in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 1, pp. 570–6, available at iranica.com.
38. al-Kāşyarī, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, ed. R. Dankoff, II, p. 509.
39. Ibid., p. 605. For Old Turkic *toŋa/tuŋa*, see Clauson, *Etymological Dictionary*, p. 515.
40. al-Kāşyarī, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, ed. R. Dankoff, I, p. 173.
41. Yusuf Khass Hajib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory*, transl. R. Dankoff, p. 48. For the Turkic text, see *Qutadghu Bilig*, ed. Arat, I, p. 43.
42. 'qāz Name of the daughter of Afrāsiyāb. She is the one who built the city of Qazvīn. The root-form of this is: *qāz oyni* meaning "Qaz's playground (*mul'ab*)" since she used to live there and play ... Also the city of Qum, since: *qum* in Turkic is "sand (*raml*)" and this daughter of Afrāsiyāb used to hunt there and frequent it ... *Toŋa alp ār* – who is Afrāsiyāb – built the city of Marv ...' (al-Kāşyarī, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, ed. R. Dankoff, II, p. 509).
43. Ibid., p. 510.
44. For a summary of the Hun–Magyar theory, see J. Szűcs, 'Theoretical Elements in Master Simon of Kéza's *Gesta Hungarorum* (1282–1285)', in László Veszprémy and Frank Schaer, eds and transl., *Simonis de Géza Gesta Hungarorum/Simon of Kéza The Deeds of the Hungarians* (Budapest, 1999), pp. xli–lxxii.
45. For a short historical survey of the genre, see Yusuf Khass Hajib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory* (tr. R. Dankoff), pp. 3–8.
46. See, for example, C. E. Bosworth, 'An Early Arabic Mirror for Princes: Tahir Dhu'l-Yaminain's Epistle to his Son 'Abdallah (206/821)', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 29 (1970), pp. 25–41.
47. Reuben Levy, transl., *A Mirror for Princes: The Qabus Nama by Kaika'us ibn Iskandar Prince of Gurgan* (New York, 1951); E. Birnbaum, 'A Lifemanship Manual: The Earliest Turkish Version of the *Kabusname*?', *Journal of Turkish Studies* 1 (1977), pp. 3–64; E. Birnbaum, ed., *The Book of Advice* (Duxbury, MA, 1981).
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49. On al-Ghazālī and his work, see Nasrollah Pourjavady, ‘Ġazālī, Abū Hāmed Mohammad, iv. Minor Persian works’, *Encyclopædia Iranica*, available at iranica.com. For its English translation, see F. R. C. Bagley, transl., *Ghazali’s Book of Counsel for Kings* (London, 1971 [1964]).
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51. al-Kāshyārī, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, ed. R. Dankoff, I, pp. 6–8. For some new ideas on Kāshgharī’s ‘Turkic script’, see Larry Clark, ‘The Turkic Script and the *Kutadgu Bilig*’, in H. Boeschoten and J. Rentzsch, eds, *Turcology in Mainz/Turkologie in Mainz* (Wiesbaden, 2010), pp. 89–106.
52. For this revival, see István Vásáry, ‘Bemerkungen zum uigurischen Schrifttum in der Goldenen Horde und bei den Timuriden’, *Ural-altaische Jahrbücher*, Neue Folge 7 (1987), pp. 115–26 (reprinted in I. Vásáry, *Turks, Tatars and Russians in the 13th–16th Centuries*, Variorum Collected Studies Series, Aldershot, Hampshire/Burlington, VT, 2007).
53. H. Vambéry, *Uigurische Sprachmonumente und das Kudatku Bilik* (Leipzig, 1870); W. Radloff, *Kudatku Bilik: Facsimile der uigurischen Handschrift der K. K. Hofbibliothek in Wien* (St Petersburg, 1890); W. Radloff, *Das Kudatku Bilik des Jusuf Chass-Hadschib aus Balasagun: Teil I: Der Text in Transcription; Teil II: Text und Übersetzung nach den Handschriften von Wien und Kairo* (St Petersburg, 1891 and 1910).
54. È. N. Nadžip, ‘Sravnitel’nyi analiz tekstov Namanganskogo i Kairского spiskov “Kutadgu Bilig”’, *Sovetskaja Turkologija* 6 (1972), pp. 75–85.
55. Tang Li, *A History of Uighur Religious Conversions (5th–16th Centuries)*, ARI Working Paper 44 (Singapore, 2005), available at ari.nus.edu.sg.
56. Ş. Tekin, ‘Bilinen en eski İslami Türkçe metinler: Uygur harfleriyle yazılmış Karahanlılar devrine âit tarla satış senetleri (473 [1080], 483[1090])’, *Selcuklu Araştırmalar Dergisi* 4 (1975), pp. 157–86; ‘A Qarahānīd Document of AD 1121 (AH 515) from Yarkand’, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3–4 (1979–80), pp. 868–83; Marcel Erdal, ‘The Turkish Yarkand Documents’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47 (1984), pp. 260–301; M. Gronke, ‘The Arabic Yārkand Documents’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 49 (1986), pp. 454–507.
57. Mecdut Mansuroğlu, ‘Das Karakhanidische’, in Jean Deny et al., eds, *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta I* (Wiesbaden, 1959), pp. 87–108.
58. ‘[M]y whole [work] is in the dialect of Kashghar ... everyone who knows the dialect of Kashgar will understand what Edip has said’, pp. 499–502 *tamamı erür kaşğari til bile ... eger bilse kaşğar tilin her kişi, bilür ol edibning ne kim aymışı*. (Reşid Rahmeti Arat, Edib Ahmed b. Mahmud Yükneki, *Atebetü ’l-hakayık*. [Istanbul, 1951], pp. 50, 101). For Aḥmad Yüknekī and his work, see T. Gülensoy, ‘Atebetü’l-hakāyık’, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 4 (1991), pp. 50–1.



## Nizām al-Mulk: A Maverick Vizier?

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Nizām al-Mulk was a numinous figure, whose memory as the ‘servant of the state’ has been cherished, despite his obvious flaws, by many generations of Iranians. But his career fits, at least to some extent, Lord Acton’s axiom, expressed in 1887, that ‘power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad.’ Nizām al-Mulk demonstrated this axiom ever more clearly in the course of his astonishingly prolonged grip on power. In his time the vizierate was what you made of it – and just as the caliph in some essential senses was both emperor and pope, so too Nizām al-Mulk was both head of the bureaucracy and ‘prime minister’, and on occasion also a university chancellor, head of the diplomatic service, and a military chief of staff. It must have seemed at the time that there was no nook or cranny of public life into which he did not stick his long nose, or – to use the Persian equivalent – he was *darāz-dast* (‘long-handed’). In addition to these diverse and wide-ranging responsibilities, he needed to have eyes in the back of his head to guard himself against constant plots and personal danger. The chronic uncertainty that this situation engendered helps to explain a policy that later generations as well as his contemporaries condemned – namely, the way in which he stuffed public posts with members of his own family. Indeed, at one stage 12 of his sons held high government positions simultaneously.<sup>1</sup> One would not be far wrong in regarding him as a *capo mafioso* well ahead of his time.

But the remarkable thing is that no short description can do justice to so protean and complex a figure. Above all, he had the difficult – and at times it must have seemed impossible – task of serving as the intimate adviser and first port of call to rulers who were powerful and wilful personalities, and whose upbringing and mindset could scarcely have been more different from his own. They were Turks, not Persians, and belonged to a nomadic society, not a settled one. Their norms and forms were not his, and it required constant vigilance on his part to handle the difficulties that arose as a natural result of these perspectives.

What manner of man was this, who inspired alongside the hatred of his rivals such universal respect? There can be no doubt that he himself saw his career and his responsibilities not simply in the context of his own troubled

times, but also from the wider perspective of Iranian history, and in particular that of the Sasanian Empire. The accounts of the sayings of Buzurgmihr scattered throughout his *Mirror for Princes* work, the *Siyāsatnāma*, indicate clearly enough whom Nizām al-Mulk saw as a model, as the following pronouncement makes clear: 'The kings who have become great rulers and whose names will be blessed until the resurrection, have all been those who had good vazirs.'<sup>2</sup> What was a good vizier? Nizām al-Mulk himself outlines a suitable job description: 'A vazir needs to belong to a pure religion, to have sound faith and to adhere to a good school of doctrine – either Hanafī or Shāfi'ī – and he must be efficient, shrewd, a fluent writer, and loyal to his king.'<sup>3</sup>

Lambton argues for a clear distinction between the 'men of the pen', to which group viziers, usually Persian, belonged, and the 'men of the sword', who in the Seljuq period were mostly of Turkish extraction.<sup>4</sup> She points out, moreover, that the most important function of the vizier was the supervising of state finances. Given his religious education, his administrative skills and his wide experience, Nizām al-Mulk certainly conforms to the usual profile of a 'man of the pen' trained in Perso-Islamic learning and statecraft.

However, it has long been known that certain viziers exceeded their brief as dutiful bureaucrats, and on occasion took over the whole running of the state in times when a caliph or sultan was a minor, or an adult who could easily be dominated. In his own career Nizām al-Mulk went a good deal further than the idealized blueprint for a vizier that he advocates in the *Siyāsatnāma*.

This paper can do no more than hint at some of the ways in which the definition of the vizierate was stretched and tweaked by Nizām al-Mulk. But the discussion below will aim to highlight in particular a lesser-known facet of his career – his personal participation in military engagements.

First, a few words to sketch the background: Nizām al-Mulk is usually described as the vizier of the second and third Seljuq sultans, Alp Arslān and Malikshāh, and he filled that office so well that he governed the Seljuq state for 30 years. But, cast in the mould of earlier Iranian bureaucrats such as al-Bal'amī,<sup>5</sup> his task was rendered much harder than that of his predecessors by a new and most volatile ingredient: the nomadic Turks. Even allowing for negative, anguished exaggeration in Christian accounts<sup>6</sup> and for laudatory, 'whitewashing' comments in Muslim ones, the impact of these nomads under their Seljuq chieftains must have been violent and disruptive.<sup>7</sup> They entered the Muslim world, as the dynastic historian of the Seljuqs, al-Husaynī describes them, 'completely attached to warfare and its practice ... The Seljuqs wander about like desperadoes and outcasts ... careless whether they suffer destruction and perish ... They have horsemen who boldly face death. They are hardly to be considered as human beings.'<sup>8</sup>

The problems posed by these unassimilated nomadic Turks were exacerbated by the peripatetic lifestyle that they continued to follow once they had entered the eastern Islamic world. Alp Arslān regularly criss-crossed his

vast domains, which stretched from Aleppo to Marv. Such traversing of tracts of territory between winter and summer pastures was a long-established custom for the Seljuq Turks, as for other nomads; but, for the Iranian bureaucrat and scholar that Nizām al-Mulk was, accompanying the sovereign on such protracted journeys must have required enormous reserves of stamina. Yet he had to go with the sultans in order to keep control of what was going on. His strategic skills had to be exercised on the move.

Nizām al-Mulk had to contend with many conflicting groups, and their relationships both with each other and with him – the relationships between the Seljuq family and their nomadic followers, between individual members of the Seljuq family, between the Seljuqs and the cities they governed, between the Seljuq sultan and the caliph, and between all these groups and himself. This required him to perform a diabolically difficult balancing act.

### *Nizām al-Mulk: The Fighting Vizier*

In view of his prestigious reputation as an administrator, religious scholar of Shāfi'ī *fiqh*,<sup>9</sup> founder of madrasas and writer of a famous Mirror for Princes, it is perhaps surprising to think of Nizām al-Mulk donning armour and leading troops into battle, but that is what he is recorded as doing at certain times. Indeed, it is mentioned specifically in a number of primary sources that during his period in power Nizām al-Mulk actually fought in battles and commanded sieges – sometimes in the company of the sultan, but sometimes even on his own. Especially in the reign of Alp Arslān (r. 455–65 [1063–73]), when the sultan was moving so energetically across the length and breadth of Iran, consolidating his power in the border areas of his empire, Nizām al-Mulk is often mentioned in the primary sources as fighting in person. This military activity is first mentioned for the year 456 (1064) when, according to al-Husaynī, he donned armour (*labisa al-silāh*) and lined up (cavalry) detachments (*'abbā al-katā'ib*) during the power struggle between Alp Arslān and his relative, Qutlumush, the cousin of Sultan Tughril.<sup>10</sup>

That same year, in the company of Alp Arslān's young son, Malikshāh, who was the heir to the throne, Nizām al-Mulk performed feats of military distinction at a frontier town called Maryam-nishīn,<sup>11</sup> preparing ships and river boats and labouring night and day until the town was taken<sup>12</sup> – with the assistance, so al-Husaynī relates, of an earthquake during the night.<sup>13</sup> The story of this episode as presented by al-Husaynī has clearly been embellished in order to laud the achievements of the young Seljuq prince Malikshāh himself. It is unlikely that, aged only 11 at the time, he could have achieved the military feats attributed to him, or even been allowed to attempt them.<sup>14</sup> It is much more likely that Nizām al-Mulk was fully in control.

In 459 (1067) Nizām al-Mulk 'kindled the fires of war' with his own army against Fadlūn, the lord of Ganja.<sup>15</sup> Next he is recorded as being in Fars, conquering citadels one by one, 'now by negotiation and now by fighting'.<sup>16</sup>

Ibn al-Athīr describes this achievement as enhancing the already high reputation that Nizām al-Mulk enjoyed with Alp Arslān: 'He [Alp Arslān] exalted him even higher and added to his authority.'<sup>17</sup>

It is thus clear that Nizām al-Mulk was given military responsibilities, such as recruiting armies and besieging fortresses, and even that he may indeed have assumed such responsibilities on his own initiative. In his obituary of Nizām al-Mulk, al-Subkī states grandly that Nizām al-Mulk participated in military operations in Rum, Aleppo, Khurāsān and Transoxiana.<sup>18</sup>

Given this succession of military activities on the part of Nizām al-Mulk, it is surprising that this aspect of his career as vizier has not received much attention from modern scholars of the Seljuqs. Of course, there has been some mention of his fighting.<sup>19</sup> Klausner rightly points out that Nizām al-Mulk was militarily active especially in the early stages of expansion in the time of Alp Arslān, when raids were conducted on several fronts at the same time.<sup>20</sup> Only Safi sees the importance of Nizām al-Mulk having had military experience in helping him deal with the Turkish military commanders.<sup>21</sup>

But a number of other points should be made in this context. Why should an undoubtedly well-educated, cultivated 'man of the pen' become involved in actual warfare? Why did Alp Arslān not delegate the task of leading the Seljuq forces to other Turkish military commanders rather than to his Persian civilian vizier? Clearly Nizām al-Mulk was still young enough to take active command; he was 46 years old when he is first recorded as fighting,<sup>22</sup> and this active participation continued for at least a further eight years. It is probable that in the early days of Alp Arslān's sultanate, when his family rivals needed to be dealt with and border territories had to be secured, Nizām al-Mulk, with his fabled sagacity and undoubted ruthlessness,<sup>23</sup> felt it essential to be at the sultan's side as much as possible. His going on campaign with the sultan in the latter's early days in power must have brought the two men very close together, and Nizām al-Mulk would thus have learned a great deal first-hand about the milieu in which the Seljuqs lived and how they thought. Fighting alongside Alp Arslān was a sure method of showing solidarity with him and gaining his respect. Being with him so frequently would have enabled Nizām al-Mulk to teach him how to conduct himself in court ceremonies and religious gatherings. Quite possibly, Nizām al-Mulk used this opportunity to learn Turkish.

Later, in the time of Malikshāh, he maintained this same close proximity to the sultan, especially when he began to fall from favour. Nizām al-Mulk obviously followed a strategy of keeping his friends close but his enemies closer. He even accompanied Malikshāh when he indulged in his favourite pastime of hunting. According to Ibn al-Jawzī, in 479 (1086–87), Malikshāh went hunting with Nizām al-Mulk in the desert between Najaf and Kufa. They hunted gazelles and other animals, and Malikshāh built a tower of horns from the animals he had killed.<sup>24</sup> One cannot escape the conclusion that Nizām al-Mulk was keeping watch on Malikshāh at all times. How else can one explain

why an elderly statesman – Nizām al-Mulk was by then 69 – would go hunting with Malikshāh?

Nizām al-Mulk is also recorded as having his own private army, numbering thousands of *mamlūks*.<sup>25</sup> Their devotion to him seems clear, given their violent reaction to his death and the reprisals they soon took against his rival, Tāj al-Mulk, whom they obviously blamed for his death, tearing his body to pieces in a frenzied attack. That Nizām al-Mulk possessed his own private army is scarcely surprising. Because of the largely peripatetic lifestyle that he performed followed in the reign of Alp Arslān and in the early years of Malikshāh's rule, Nizām al-Mulk often visited border areas where he might have been vulnerable to a fatal attack if he had displeased the sultan; indeed, it is worth remembering that he was murdered in a remote place while on a journey with Malikshāh to Baghdad in 485 (1092). The control wielded by Nizām al-Mulk as vizier over the *dīvāns* and, above all, the state finances, might easily have provoked the envy of the ruler. The sources also speak of the vast personal fortune of Nizām al-Mulk.

Moreover, political rivals in Alp Arslān's and Malikshāh's entourages could and often did create serious difficulties for Nizām al-Mulk. It was dangerous to be a vizier, but Nizām al-Mulk knew how to defend himself. So a large retinue of bodyguards, it may be assumed, was constantly watching over his personal safety; and, in view of his unusually long period in power, these *mamlūks* must have performed their task extremely well. This was proved by the fact that he is recorded as having survived two attempts on his life in the time when his relationship with Malikshāh was deteriorating. It may also be assumed that Nizām al-Mulk operated some form of surveillance system (*barīd*), as he advocated in his advice to the sultan in the *Siyāsatnāma*.<sup>26</sup>

### *Other Fighting Viziers in the Seljuq Period*

Nizām al-Mulk was not the only Seljuq vizier who entered the military arena. In Fairbanks's analysis of the *Ta'rikh al-vuzarā'* of the late-twelfth-century Persian writer Najm al-Dīn Qummī, he includes a very interesting chapter entitled 'The Military and Other Roles of the Vizier',<sup>27</sup> in which he mentions some examples of fighting viziers. According to Qummī, the Seljuq sultan Mas'ūd (r. 529–47 [1134–52]) singled out an official called Kamāl al-Dīn Muhammad Khāzin especially for his military abilities: 'Kamāl al-Dīn Muhammad struck Sultan Mas'ūd as something astonishing. He was a man of the sword, not of the pen.'<sup>28</sup> Mas'ūd later conferred the vizierate on Kamāl al-Dīn, who clearly knew, at least for a while, how to govern the state: 'He laid down law and order as no other vizier had done. Every day he was busy making light of the emirs who commanded the armies. He threw vinegar in the noses of all of them.'<sup>29</sup> In the end, however, such a show of strength proved inadequate against a coalition of emirs who demanded the execution of Kamāl al-Dīn, and Mas'ūd was forced to hand him over.<sup>30</sup>

Further west, in thirteenth-century Anatolia, another Seljuq fighting vizier comes to mind whose conduct in power resembles that of Nizām al-Mulk – Mu‘īn al-Dīn Parvāna (d. 676 [1297]).<sup>31</sup> He too was not a professional military man. Like Nizām al-Mulk, he belonged firmly within the Persian bureaucratic tradition, although he was at times drawn into military engagements. Like Nizām al-Mulk in the Great Seljuq state, Parvāna became the real ruler of the Rum Seljuq state in Anatolia, and stayed in power for more than 20 years. His political longevity argues strongly that he possessed great political and survival skills. Like Nizām al-Mulk, he too came to a terrible end – indeed an even more ignominious one, being killed and then allegedly eaten by the Mongols.

*Badr al-Jamālī: A Fighting Vizier in Fatimid Egypt*

It is interesting to compare Nizām al-Mulk with his almost exact contemporary and counterpart in Fatimid Egypt, Badr al-Jamālī. Bianquis writes about the installation of what he calls the ‘military vizierate’ in Fatimid Egypt in the reign of al-Mustansir. This caliph (r. 427–87 [1036–94]) invited the Armenian general, Badr al-Jamālī, to come to Cairo in 464 (1072–73) and, on his arrival, granted him full civil and military powers, which Badr al-Jamālī enjoyed right up to his death in 487 (1094).<sup>32</sup> The ways in which Nizām al-Mulk exercised supreme power in the Seljuq state, breaking through the boundaries described in the blueprint for medieval Muslim government that the *Mirrors for Princes* literature presents, can usefully be compared to the conduct of Badr al-Jamālī, who ruled the Fatimid state in a way similar to that of Nizām al-Mulk. It is small wonder that the Fatimid caliph, al-Mustansir, had called on the services of a military man in 466 (1074); there had, after all, been 49 viziers since his accession in 427 (1036).

Like Nizām al-Mulk, Badr al-Jamālī lived to a ripe old age (around 80); he had ruled for 21 years, and died two years after Nizām al-Mulk. Just as Nizām al-Mulk is clearly portrayed as being in charge of the Seljuq state in its entirety, so too is Badr al-Jamālī in the Fatimid context. Ibn Muyassar calls Badr al-Jamālī a ‘wazīr of the sword’ and writes of him: ‘He had ruled as kings do in Egypt and, with him in charge, no power remained for al-Mustansir who handed over affairs to him.’<sup>33</sup> The same source mentions how Badr al-Jamālī killed many people and made the state flourish.<sup>34</sup>

So both these men, one in Iran and the other in Egypt, transcended the limits normally laid down in medieval Muslim bureaucratic manuals and *Mirrors for Princes* literature for the vizierate. But their attitudes and approach must have been very different, for Badr al-Jamālī was a military man who became a vizier, and Nizām al-Mulk was a vizier who, for a while at least, became a military man.

### *Why Was Nizām al-Mulk Called Atābeg?*

The significance of the title *atābeg* in the career of Nizām al-Mulk deserves analysis at this point, since it clearly sheds light on the success that he had achieved in reaching accommodation and a *modus operandi* with the alien Turkish newcomers.

The Turkish term *atābeg* does not seem to have been used in the medieval Muslim sources before the coming of the nomadic Turks. What it meant for them in the days preceding their entry into the Muslim world remains unclear. According to Peter Golden, ‘The *atābeg* institution, at least with that title, is not mentioned in Old–Middle Turkic materials until into the Seljuq era’.<sup>35</sup> Golden argues most persuasively that, if such an office had existed in Inner Asia in pre-Seljuq times among the Türk Ashina royal clan or their Uyghur successors, the Tang court historians would have mentioned it. But the Russian historian Agadzhanov writes that the Seljuqs did retain some steppe traditions from the Oghuz tribes in Jangikent whose leaders were called *yabghus*.<sup>36</sup> He especially mentions the role of *atābegs* who acted as the guardians, mentors and educators of their under-age princes. And Golden also concludes that he would ‘not totally exclude the possibility’ of the existence of the *atābeg* institution, ‘at least among the Oghuz’.<sup>37</sup>

So when was the first time that the term *atābeg* was used in a Muslim context? Although it is usually thought that Nizām al-Mulk was the first person to be described in this way in the Arabo-Persian world,<sup>38</sup> there is an earlier reference by al-Husaynī to an official in the entourage of Sultan Tughril’s brother, Chagri. This official was called Atābeg Amīr Qutb al-Dīn Kül-sarīgh,<sup>39</sup> he was captured while fighting against the Ghaznavids.<sup>40</sup>

Even before Chagri’s death in 451 (1059), Nizām al-Mulk had been appointed as Alp Arslān’s vizier. Indeed, Chaghri had been so impressed by the abilities of Nizām al-Mulk that he had told his son Alp Arslān to view this gifted Persian administrator as his father (surely an echo of the idea enshrined in the word *atābeg*). According to Ibn Khallikān, Dā’ūd (i.e. Chagri Beg) ‘received such proofs of fidelity and attachment, that he gave him [Nizām al-Mulk] over to his son, Alp Arslān, saying: “Consider him as a parent, and disobey not his counsels”’.<sup>41</sup>

Here it appears that the role of Nizām al-Mulk was envisaged as that of a fatherly adviser to Alp Arslān, although the term *atābeg* is not used. By the time of Malikshāh’s accession in 465 (1073), however, the term *atābeg* is specifically mentioned in connection with Nizām al-Mulk. Ibn al-Athīr records that Malikshāh said to Nizām al-Mulk: ‘I hand over to you all matters, great and small, for you are the father [*anta al-wālīd*] ... He [Malikshāh] gave him [Nizām al-Mulk] titles amongst which was *atābeg*, the meaning of which is father – commander’.<sup>42</sup>

How can the term *atābeg* be viewed in this context? Ibn Khallikān attempts a definition as follows: ‘This word means “a bringer-up of princes”: *ata* in

Turkish signifying “father” and *bek* “emir”.<sup>43</sup> Describing the role of an *atābeg* from the period of Alp Arslān at least, Cahen writes that this term denotes ‘a military chief in the ruler’s entourage, to whom the ruler entrusts the education and care of his son, ultimately marrying him to the pupil’s mother’.<sup>44</sup>

While this definition largely applies to later holders of the *atābeg* title in the Seljuq and Ayyubid periods,<sup>45</sup> it certainly does not fit Nizām al-Mulk, who could not be regarded primarily as a military chief and who did not marry Malikshāh’s mother. Nevertheless, Nizām al-Mulk, despite being a Persian civilian, seems to have accepted being designated as Malikshāh’s *atābeg*.

The timing of the appointment of Nizām al-Mulk as Malikshāh’s *atābeg* is surely significant – for it occurred just after he had performed admirably well in the military arena. The long years of travelling around the empire with Alp Arslān and fighting, raiding, laying sieges and commissioning troops, either with the sultan or in the company of the young Malikshāh, had earned Nizām al-Mulk what Safi rightly calls ‘the highest military honour the Turkish warlords had to offer’ – the title *atābeg*.<sup>46</sup> In more popular parlance, Nizām al-Mulk was being made ‘an honorary Turk’. From his point of view this was a triumph, validating his right to control the young sultan, and indeed to take over and centralize the organization of a new polity, the Seljuq state, based on a blend of Persian statecraft and Turkish military strength.

A number of obscurities and misconceptions surround the ‘educational’ role of an *atābeg*. It is likely that the duties of such an office would have involved teaching the prince equestrian skills, bowmanship and other martial arts. Ironically, Nizām al-Mulk was the only *atābeg* who had the qualifications necessary to educate a prince in the religious sciences and Sasanian statecraft, rather than the arts of war. Whether he did so or not is unclear.

After Malikshāh’s death, the role of *atābeg* was given only to Turkish military chiefs. It became a force for fragmentation, creating centrifugal tendencies within the Seljuq state, especially during periods when central power was weak. Its educational aspects seem to have been more honoured in the breach than the observance. It seems to have functioned primarily as an instrument of control, and for the acquisition of power.

### *Concluding Comments*

This essay has focused on Nizām al-Mulk during the formative early years of his vizierate – in the period of consolidation of Seljuq power under Alp Arslān, and to a lesser extent under Malikshāh. This was a period when Nizām al-Mulk was already proving his mettle as an extraordinarily clever, flexible and versatile leader, ready to perform a military role as well as a civilian one. He gained the confidence and respect of the recently arrived Turkish leaders by spending extensive time in their company, in what must have been most arduous conditions and on exhausting journeys.



Nizām al-Mulk's truly awesome achievement in staying in power for over 30 years in a constantly unstable, unpredictable, violent and indeed murderous milieu benefitted from the early experiences discussed here. He succeeded in holding together the Seljuq Empire by a combination of subtlety and ruthlessness, by extraordinary stamina, by personal courage, and thanks to a truly formidable intellect. As Ibn al-ʿAdīm said, 'In reality, the state came under [Nizām al-Mulk's] control and was the sultan's only in ceremonial and name'.<sup>47</sup>

Nizām al-Mulk was attempting an almost impossible task: to achieve balance and harmony between various perennially conflicting forces, including the Turcomans and the sultans, the sultans and their relatives, the Seljuqs and their emirs, the cities and the nomads, and the Persian bureaucrats and the populations they ruled, from Jerusalem to Samarqand. Above all, he aimed to maintain stability in an empire that he almost single-handedly built up to cover the land mass ruled by the ancient Sasanian Empire. While he was alive, the unity of the Seljuq state remained intact. But once he was dead, nothing worked as well again.

## Notes:

1. Nīshāpūrī, *Saljūqnāma*, ed. A. H. Morton (Chippenham, 2004), p. 31; Rāvandī, *Rāhat al-sudūr wa-āyat al-surūr*, ed. M. Iqbal (London, 1921), p. 116.
2. Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyāsatnāma*, transl. H. Darke as *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings* (Henley-on-Thames, 1978), p. 173.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
4. A. K. S. Lambton, 'wazīr', in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn.
5. See A. Peacock, *Medieval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Bal'amī's Tarīkhnāma* (London, 2007), pp. 25–35.
6. See, for example, Aristakes of Lastivert, *History: About the Sufferings Visited Upon by Foreign Peoples Living Around Us*, transl. M. Canard and H. Berbérien as *Récit des malheurs de la nation arménienne* (Brussels, 1973), pp. 75–87, from the edition and Russian translation of the Armenian text by K. Yuzbashian, Moscow, 1968.
7. See Ibn Hassūl, *Kitāb tafdīl al-atrāk 'alā sā'ir al-aqnād*, ed. A. 'Azzawī (Cairo, 1940), pp. 40–1; Sharaf al-Zamān Tāhir Marvazī, *Tabā'i' al-hayavān*, trans. V. Minorsky as *Sharaf al-Zamān Tāhir Marvazī on China, the Turks and India* (London, 1942), pp. 29–39.
8. Al-Husaynī, *Akhbār al-dawla al-saljūqīyya*, ed. M. Iqbal (Beirut, 1984), p. 8, transl. C. E. Bosworth as *The History of the Seljuq State: A Translation with Commentary of Akhbār al-dawla al-saljūqīyya* (Abingdon, 2011), p. 13. See Q. Ayaz, *An Unexploited Source for the History of the Seljuqs: A Translation and Critical Commentary on the Akhbār al-dawla al-saljūqīyya*, unpublished PhD thesis (Edinburgh, 1985).
9. See Alexey Khismatulin's article in this volume for the view that Nizām al-Mulk's supposed authorship of the *Siyāsatnāma* was a deliberate forgery by the poet laureate Mu'izzī.
10. Al-Husaynī, *History of the Seljuq State*, p. 27.
11. The location of this town is not known, but its name is 'probably a corruption of Marmarashen, a famous monastery in the district of Shirak (between the Araxes and Kur valleys)' (*ibid.*, n. 135).
12. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi'l-ta'rīkh*, transl. D. S. Richards as *The Annals of the Seljuk Turks* (London, 2002), p. 153.
13. Al-Husaynī, *History of the Seljuq State*, p. 30.
14. Malikshāh is described as securing a rope to the parapet of the walls and then climbing up. Not the wisest move for an 11-year-old heir apparent.
15. Al-Husaynī, *History of the Seljuq State*, p. 34. See also G. Le Strange, *Description of the Province of Fars in Persia at the Beginning of the Fourteenth Century AD from the MS of Ibn al-Balkhī in the British Museum* (London, 1912), p. 10.
16. Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān fi ta'rīkh al-a'yān*, ed. A. Sevim (Ankara, 1968), 137; Ibn al-Athīr, *Annals of the Seljuk Turks*, p. 160.
17. Ibn al-Athīr, *Annals of the Seljuk Turks*, p. 160.
18. Al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-kubrā*, ed. M. Tanāhī and A. al-Hulw (Cairo, 1964), IV, p. 313.

19. C. L. Klausner, *The Seljuk Vezirate: A Study of Civil Administration 1055–1194* (Cambridge, MA, 1973), pp. 87–8; S. Fairbanks, 'The *Ta'rikh al-vuzārā*: A History of the Seljuq Bureaucracy', unpublished PhD dissertation (University of Michigan, 1977), p. 151; O. Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Pre-Modern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), pp. 59–60; A. K. S. Lambton, 'The Internal Structure of the Seljuq Empire', in J. A. Boyle, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. V: The Seljuq and Mongol Periods* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 261.
20. Klausner, *Seljuk Vizierate*, p. 40.
21. Safi, *Politics of Knowledge*, p. 60.
22. The year 456 (1064).
23. The grisly death of al-Kundurī, the predecessor of Nizām al-Mulk in the vizierate, is blamed squarely on the latter. See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, transl. Baron M. de Slane as *Kitāb Wafayāt al-A'yān: Ibn Khallikān's Biographical Dictionary* (Paris, 1843–71), III, pp. 294–5.
24. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam fī tar'ikh al-mulūk wa'l-umam*, ed. F. Krenkow (Hyderabad, 1357–58 [1938–40]), IX, pp. 35, 70.
25. The figures vary widely between 20,000 and 80,000 *mamlūks*. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, 9, 66; al-Husaynī, *Akhbār*, p. 145. Ibn al-'Adīm claims more modestly that Nizām al-Mulk had 7,000 male and 7,000 female *mamlūks*; see Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughyat al-talab fī tar'ikh Halab*, partial ed. A. Sevim as *Biyografilerle Selcukular Tarihi Ibnu'l-Adim Bügyetu't-taleb fī Tarihi Haleb* (Ankara, 1982), p. 89. In any case, it may be assumed that it was an unusually large group.
26. Iqbal/Darke, *Book of Government*, pp. 74–7.
27. Fairbanks, 'The *Ta'rikh al-vuzārā*', pp. 151–66.
28. Ibid., p. 151, citing the *Tar'ikh al-vuzārā*, Dār al-kutub (Cairo, Persian MS 7), f. 85a.
29. *Tar'ikh al-vuzārā*, f. 85b; Fairbanks, 'The *Ta'rikh al-vuzārā*', p. 152.
30. Fairbanks lists other viziers who accompanied their sultans into battle in the late Seljuq period, pointing out that, for the twelfth century, 'only slightly more than half the viziers had ever held positions in the bureaucracy which they were appointed to head' (Fairbanks, 'The *Ta'rikh al-vuzārā*', pp. 152–3).
31. See C. Hillenbrand, 'Mu'in al-Dīn Parwāna', in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn; C. Hillenbrand, 'Mu'in al-Dīn Parwāna: The Servant of Two Masters?', in F. de Jong, ed., *Miscellanea Arabica et Islamica* (Louvain, 1993), pp. 267–75.
32. Thierry Bianquis, 'wazīr: The Fātimid caliphate', in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn.
33. Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbār Misr. Choix de passages de la Chronique d'Égypte d'Ibn Muyassar*, ed. A. F. Sayyid (Cairo, 1981), p. 52. For a detailed account of the reign of al-Mustansir, see K. Clarke, 'Aspects of the Reign of al-Mustansir Bi'llāh, 427–487/1036–1094', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Edinburgh, 2006).
34. Note that Badr al-Jamālī was called *wazīr al-sayf wa'l-qalam* ('the vizier of the sword and the pen'): H. Eisenstein, 'Die Wezire Ägyptens unter al-Mustansir AH 452–466', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, LXXVII (1987), p. 49.
35. Personal communication, October 2012.
36. S. G. Agadshanow, *Gosudarstwo Seldsukidow i Srednjaja Asija w XI–XII ww.* (Moscow, 1991), trans. R. Schletzer as *Der Staat der Seldschukiden und Mittelasien im 11–12 Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1994), p. 34.

37. Agadshyanow, *Staat Seldschukiden*, pp. 37, 145. It is also interesting that Golden, in his extremely helpful personal message to me, comments that 'The Georgians adopted the institution (*at'abagi*)'. It is noted under Queen Tamar (r. 1184–1212) in S. Qaukhch'ishvili, ed., *K'art'lis Ts'khovreba* (Tbilisi, 1955), I, pp. 368, 370. Tamar is credited with creating the office.
38. Lambton remarks that the first well-attested mention of the term *atābeg* in a Muslim context is in connection with Nizām al-Mulk: Lambton, 'Internal Structure', pp. 239–40.
39. Bosworth notes that this early Turkish title apparently means 'pale-complexioned': al-Husayni, *History of the Seljuq State*, p. 138 n. 115, citing L. Rasonyi and I. Baski, 'Onomasticon Turcicum: Turkic Personal Names', *Indiana University Uralic and Altaic Studies* 172 (Bloomington, IN, 2007), II, pp. 389, 634–5.
40. Al-Husaynī, *History of the Seljuq State*, p. 26.
41. Ibn Khallikān, *Kitāb Wafayāt al-A'yān*, I, p. 413.
42. Ibn al-Athīr, *Annals of the Seljuk Turks*, pp. 181–2.
43. Ibn Khallikān, *Kitāb Wafayāt al-A'yān*, I, p. 330.
44. C. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, transl. J. Jones-Williams (London, 1968), p. 37.
45. The term became known in later Chinese sources as *a-t'a-bei*. See E. Bretschneider, *Medieval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources* (London, 1967), I, p. 146.
46. Safi, *Politics of Knowledge*, p. 133.
47. Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughyat al-talab*, p. 67.

## Ismaili–Seljuq Relations: Conflict and Stalemate

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From early in their eventful history, the Ismailis as Shi'i Muslims believed that the Umayyads, and after them the Abbasids, had usurped the rights of the 'Alids to the leadership of the Muslims. In line with their Imami Shi'i heritage, the Ismailis recognized a particular Husaynid line of the 'Alids, descendants of 'Alī b. Abī Tālib through his son al-Husayn. The Ismailis separated from the rest of the Imami Shi'is on the death of Imam Ja'far al-Sādiq in 148 (765). They traced their imamate through al-Sādiq's son Ismā'īl, the eponymous protagonist of the Ismā'īliyya.

By the middle of the third (ninth) century, the Ismailis had organized a dynamic revolutionary movement against the established Sunni–Abbasid order headed by the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. The primary objective of this movement, designated as the *da'wa* or *al-da'wa al-hādiya* ('the rightly guiding mission'), was to install the imam recognized by the Ismailis to a new caliphate. The religio-political message of the Ismailis was disseminated by a network of *dā'īs* or summoners, who were soon operating in every region of the Islamic world – from Iraq, eastern Arabia, Yemen, Egypt and North Africa to various regions of Persia and Central Asia.

The early success of the Ismaili movement culminated in the foundation of the Fatimid caliphate in 297 (909). The religio-political *da'wa* of the Ismailis had finally led to the establishment of a state or *dawla* headed by the Ismaili imam of the time. This state soon evolved into a flourishing empire, especially after the Fatimids transferred the seat of their power from Ifrīqiya in North Africa to Egypt, where they founded their new capital city of Cairo in 358 (969). In line with their universal claims, the Ismaili Fatimid caliph-imams did not abandon their *da'wa* activities on assuming power. Aiming to extend their authority and rule over the whole of Muslim society and beyond, they retained a network of *dā'īs*, operating on their behalf as religio-political missionaries both within and outside Fatimid dominions. Indeed, Cairo was to serve as the headquarters of their complex hierarchical *da'wa* organization. The Fatimids devoted particular attention to the training of their *dā'īs*, and founded a variety of institutions to that end. Many of these *dā'īs* became eminent scholars in

theology, philosophy, jurisprudence and other exoteric (*zāhirī*) and esoteric (*bātinī*) fields of learning, making important contributions to Islamic thought and culture.

In Fatimid times, the Ismaili *da'wa* was propagated openly within the Fatimid caliphate. But with the exception of Syria, where a diversity of Shi'i traditions had coexisted throughout the centuries, the success of the Ismaili *da'wa* in Fatimid dominions, stretching from North Africa to Palestine and parts of Syria, was both very limited and transitory, as Shi'i traditions had never acquired deep roots there. It was in the territories outside the Fatimid state that the Ismaili *da'wa* had its greatest and most lasting success. Many of these regions, designated in the Ismaili literature of Fatimid times as the *jazā'ir*, or islands, scattered in the central and eastern lands of Islam from Syria to Central Asia, were already well acquainted with Shi'i traditions, including the Ismaili form of Shi'i Islam, and responded positively to the summons of the learned and skilful *dā'īs*. By the time of the long reign of the Fatimid caliph-imam al-Mustansir (427–87 [1036–94]), the Ismaili *dā'īs* had won the allegiance of a growing number of converts, in both urban and rural areas, throughout the Abbasid domain and beyond in the eastern lands of Islam, including areas under the control of the Ghaznavids, Buyids, Seljuqs, Saffarids and other dynasties emerging in the East. These converts acknowledged the reigning Fatimid caliph as the rightful imam of the time. It was essentially due to the successes of the Ismaili *dā'īs*, such as Abū Hātim al-Rāzī, Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī, Hamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī and Nāser-e Khosrow, and their successors in turn, that Ismailism spread widely throughout Iranian lands, also surviving the challenges posed by the Sunni revival of the fifth and sixth (eleventh and twelfth) centuries.

The Ismaili *da'wa* flourished in many parts of Persia when the Sunni Seljuqs succeeded the Shi'i Buyids as the overlords of the Abbasids. The *da'wa* had continued to be strong in Persia, with a growing number of converts in different towns as well as among the soldiery and the inhabitants of the northern highlands of Daylam, all acknowledging the Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir as the rightful imam of the time. Few details are known about the specific ideas preached at the time in Persia by the Ismaili *dā'īs*, who maintained close contacts with the *da'wa* headquarters in Cairo. It seems that the *dā'īs* emphasized existing social injustices, in addition to generally capitalizing on the dislike of the Persians for their new Turkish rulers. By the early 460s (1070s), the Persian Ismailis of the Seljuq sultanate owned the authority of a single chief *dā'ī*, 'Abd al-Malek b. 'Attāsh, who had established his secret headquarters at Isfahan, the main Seljuq capital. A learned scholar, 'Abd al-Malek seems to have been the very first *dā'ī* to organize the various Ismaili communities in Persia, from Kermān to Azerbaijan, and possibly in Iraq, under his central leadership. 'Abd al-Malek, like other regional chief *dā'īs*, received his general instructions from Cairo, where the Persian al-

Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī was then the chief *dā'ī* (*dā'ī al-du'āt*) for some two decades, until he was succeeded in 470 (1078) by the all-powerful Fatimid vizier Badr al-Jamālī. 'Abd al-Malek evidently reinvigorated the *da'wa* activities in many parts of the Seljuq dominions; he was also responsible for launching the career of the most famous of all Persian *dā'īs*, Hasan-e Sabbāh, the architect of the Persian Ismailis' struggle against the Seljuqs. Hasan also founded an Ismaili state in the very midst of the Seljuq sultanate.

Our main source of information on Hasan-e Sabbāh, reflecting the contemporary Persian Ismaili historiographical tradition, is his biography entitled *Sargozasht-e Sayyednā*, an anonymous work which has not survived directly. This was the first of a number of chronicles on the history of the Ismaili state in Persia during the so-called Alamut period (483–654 [1090–1256]), coinciding with almost the final century of Seljuq rule in Persia. The chronicles were arranged according to the reigns of Hasan and his seven successors at the fortress of Alamut, the headquarters of that state. These Ismaili chronicles, which were kept at Alamut and other major fortresses in Persia, have not survived directly, mainly due to the onslaught of the Mongols. But they were seen and used extensively by three historians of the Ilkhanid period, namely Juvayni (d. 681 [1283]), Rashid al-Din (d. 718 [1318]) and Kāshāni (d. c.738 [1337]), who produced histories of the Ismaili state in Persia.<sup>1</sup>

According to the *Sargozasht-e Sayyednā*,<sup>2</sup> Hasan-e Sabbāh was born in the mid 440s (1050s) in Qum, into a Twelver Shi'i family. His father, 'Ali, was a Kufan Arab who claimed Yemeni origins and had migrated from southern Iraq to the traditionally Shi'i town of Qum in Persia. Subsequently, the family had moved to the nearby city of Rayy, where the youthful Hasan received his early religious education as a Twelver Shi'i. At that time Rayy served as the centre of the Ismaili *da'wa* in the Jibāl. And it was at Rayy that Hasan, at around the age of 17, was introduced to Ismaili doctrines by a certain Amireh Zarrāb, one of the several local *dā'īs* there. On reading some Ismaili books and receiving gradual instruction from various *dā'īs* at Rayy, Hasan was won over to the Ismaili cause, recognizing the legitimacy of the imamate of Ismā'īl b. Ja'far al-Sādiq and his successors. He was thus initiated and took the customary oath of allegiance (*'ahd*) to al-Mustansir, as the rightful contemporary imam. Soon after his conversion, during Ramadān 464 (May–June 1072), Hasan was brought to the attention of the *dā'ī* 'Abd al-Malek, who was then visiting Rayy. 'Abd al-Malek was evidently impressed by Hasan, who was now appointed to a post in the *da'wa* organization, initiating a career unrivalled by any other Ismaili *dā'ī*. A couple of years later, Hasan accompanied 'Abd al-Malek to the secret headquarters of the Persian *da'wa* at Isfahan. In 469 (1076), at the suggestion of 'Abd al-Malek, Hasan-e Sabbāh set off for Egypt to further his Ismaili education and training, as Nāser-e Khosrow had done some three decades earlier.

Hasan-e Sabbāh's visit to the seat of the Fatimid state, then already in decline, must have contributed to his future decision to follow a policy independent of the Fatimid regime. Indeed, Hasan seems to have learned important lessons in Egypt, where he stayed for about three years, first in Cairo and then in Alexandria. By that time, the Persian Ismailis were already generally aware of the declining power of the Fatimid regime, and the shrewd Hasan had personally witnessed the difficulties of al-Mustansir at the very centre of the Fatimid state. In fact, it was in response to the deteriorating state of affairs, caused in no small measure by the unruly Turkish faction of the Fatimid armies, that al-Mustansir had appealed for help to Badr al-Jamālī, an Armenian general. Serving the dynasty in Syria, Badr arrived in Cairo in 466 (1074) and, with the help of his Armenian troops, succeeded in restoring some stability to the Fatimid state. Henceforth, Badr and his successors to the vizierate, rather than the Fatimid caliphs themselves, held the reins of power in the Fatimid state.

At any rate, while in Egypt Hasan must have realized that the Fatimid regime, then under the effective control of Badr al-Jamālī, lacked both the means and the resolve to assist the Persian Ismailis in their struggle against the Seljuqs, as they had been able, for example, to assist al-Basāsīrī; the latter had received both military and material help from the Fatimids in his revolt against the Seljuq leader Toghril, who had defeated the Ghaznavids and proclaimed himself sultan at Nishāpūr in 429 (1038). Toghril soon conquered the greater part of Persia, and then crossed into Iraq, entering Baghdad in 447 (1055) and ending the rule of the Buyids of Iraq. In the aftermath of these events, the Abbasid caliph confirmed Toghril's title of sultan, and the founder of the Seljuq sultanate then announced his intention of sending expeditions against the Fatimids. However, dissent within the Seljuq camp and the pro-Fatimid activities of al-Basāsīrī in Iraq prevented Toghril from carrying out his design against the Fatimids. A chief military figure in Iraq, al-Basāsīrī appealed to al-Mustansir for assistance to conquer Baghdad in his name. After receiving a substantial gift of money and arms from Cairo, delivered by the *dā'ī* al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, who also played a key role in creating anti-Seljuq disorders in Iraq, al-Basāsīrī seized several towns in Iraq, finally entering Baghdad in 450 (1058), where the *khutba* was now pronounced for one full year in the name of the Fatimids, while the Abbasid caliph remained in custody.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, al-Basāsīrī was abandoned by Cairo, and his success proved short-lived. At any rate, it was in recognition of the declining power of the Fatimids that Hasan eventually charted an independent course of action for himself.

Upon returning to Persia in 473 (1081), Hasan-e Sabbāh travelled extensively in the service of the *da'wa* for nine years, operating in Kermān, Yazd, Khuzestān and Dāmghān. It was during this crucial period in Hasan's career that he formulated his revolutionary strategy and evaluated the military



strength of the Seljuqs in various regions of Persia. Gradually, Hasan had realized the difficulties of achieving success in the central and western parts of the country – the main centres of Seljuq power. Consequently, he had turned his attention to the Caspian provinces and the northern highlands of Persia – the general medieval region of Daylam – which had familiarity with different Shi'i traditions in addition to providing safe refuge for numerous 'Alids. A stronghold of Zaydi Shi'ism, and already penetrated by the Ismaili *da'wa*, Daylam was out of reach of the Seljuqs. Hasan was then definitely planning a major revolt against the Seljuqs, and was searching for a suitable site to establish his revolutionary headquarters. By around 480 (1087), Hasan-e Sabbāh had chosen the remote and inaccessible fortress of Alamut in Rudbār (Daylamān) as the most suitable base of operations for his activities. At the time, the Ismaili *da'wa* in the Seljuq lands was still under the overall leadership of 'Abd al-Malek b. 'Attāsh, but Hasan had already embarked on a course of action independently of the Fatimid regime and its designated supreme leadership in the Seljuq domain. Hasan had effectively now begun to act as a secret revolutionary leader, who would be accountable to no one.

Hasan-e Sabbāh, who was meanwhile appointed as *dā'ī* of Daylam, devised a detailed and very clever plan for the seizure of Alamut, then held by a Zaydi 'Alid commander on behalf of the Seljuqs. He sent numerous *dā'īs* to various districts around Alamut to convert the local inhabitants, including the garrison stationed at the fortress. In Rajab 483 (September 1090), Hasan secretly entered the fortress of Alamut, disguising himself as a teacher called Dehkhodā. With his followers installed in and around the fortress, Alamut fell readily into Hasan's hands later in the autumn of 483 (1090). The seizure of Alamut initiated a new phase in the activities of the Persian Ismailis, signalling the commencement of their armed uprising against the Seljuqs, and also marking the effective foundation of what was to become an independent Ismaili state in Persia. Hasan-e Sabbāh had a complex set of religio-political motives for his revolt against the Seljuqs. As an Ismaili Shi'i, he was charged with spreading the cause of the Fatimids in Seljuq lands and, at the same time, he could not tolerate the anti-Shi'i policies of the Seljuqs who, as the new champions of Sunni Islam, had sworn to uproot the Ismaili Shi'i caliphate of the Fatimids. Less conspicuously, but just as importantly, Hasan's revolt was an expression of Persian 'national' and cultural sentiments, in the tradition of the earlier anti-Arab and anti-Abbasid revolts organized by a variety of the so-called Khorrami (or Khorramdini) groups in the Iranian lands. In other words, Hasan's revolt went beyond a strictly Ismaili one, having broader appeal to the Persians – which in fact accounted for its early popular appeal and widespread success in Persia.

By the early decades of the fifth (eleventh) century, a number of Turkish dynasties had appeared in the Iranian world. The trend towards the Turkish domination of the Iranian lands, initiated by the establishment of the Ghaznavid

and Qarakhanid dynasties, had reached a climax under the Seljuqs, who threatened the revival of Persian culture and sentiments. This revival of a specifically Persianized Islamic culture had been based on the sentiments of the Islamicized Persians, who remained conscious of their Persian identity and cultural heritage in spite of centuries of Arab domination. This process, pioneered by the Saffarids and maintained by the Samanids and the Buyids, had become irrevocable by the time of the Seljuqs, when the conversion of Persians to Islam was finally completed.<sup>4</sup> Even Nezām al-Molk, the powerful and learned vizier to the Seljuq sultans Alp Arslān (455–65 [1063–73]) and the latter's son Malekshāh (465–85 [1073–92]), it will be recalled, wrote his *Seyāsāt-nāmeḥ* for Malekshāh in Persian.

The Seljuq Turks were alien in Persia, and their rule was intensely detested by Persians of various social classes. Anti-Seljuq sentiments were further accentuated by the anarchy and depredation wrought in towns and villages by the Turks and their unruly soldiers, who continuously swarmed to Persia in new waves from Central Asia, encouraged by Seljuq victories. Hasan-e Sabbāh himself resented the Turks and their rule over Persia. He referred to the Seljuq sultan as a mere ignorant Turk;<sup>5</sup> he is also reported to have stated that the Turks were *jinn*, and not human beings.<sup>6</sup> It is also highly significant that Hasan-e Sabbāh, as an expression of his Persian identity and in spite of his intense Islamic piety, adopted Persian as the religious language of all the Persian-speaking Ismailis. This was the first time that a major Muslim community had selected Persian in preference to Arabic as its religious language. This also explains why the Persian-speaking Ismailis of Persia, Afghanistan and Central Asia, all belonging to the Nezāri branch of Ismailism, produced their literature entirely in Persian during the Alamut and subsequent phases of their history. At any rate, it was to the ultimate goal of uprooting Seljuq rule that Hasan-e Sabbāh dedicated himself, organizing the Persian Ismailis into a highly disciplined revolutionary force, and drawing much support from the Persians at large. Henceforth, Persian Ismailis of different social backgrounds, in both rural areas and towns, were to address one another as *rafiq* or 'comrade', as was appropriate in a revolutionary movement.

The early success of the revolt led by Hasan-e Sabbāh in Persia was also rooted in certain economic grievances shared by the landless villagers and highlanders there, as well as by artisans and craftsmen, who accounted for most of the underprivileged social classes in Seljuq dominions. In Daylam and elsewhere, these masses were subjected to the oppressive and alien rule of a multitude of Seljuq emirs who held and administered different localities as their *iqṭā'*, or allotted land, on behalf of the sultan. These emirs levied taxes on villagers who cultivated the land and lived under their jurisdiction, and they also maintained local armies to assist the sultan as required. The Seljuq institution of *iqṭā'* led to the effective subjugation of the Persian peasantry by the alien Turks. A variety of townspeople, too, including and especially

artisans, craftsmen and the dispossessed lower social classes, were dissatisfied with the Seljuq social order and the excessive taxes levied on them in both rural and urban areas. By contrast, those Persians who became incorporated into the territories held by the Ismailis in Persia were treated more equitably in a revolutionary society dedicated to the ideal of social justice. It is known, for instance, that the booty acquired in Ismaili campaigns was distributed equally among all; and the Ismailis viewed their participation in communal projects, such as improving the irrigation system of particular localities or the construction of fortresses, as public activities beneficial to their entire community. It is also noteworthy that strict class strata and distinctions of the sort developed under the Seljuqs did not exist among the Ismailis. Any capable individual could aspire to a leadership position, as governor of a stronghold or chief *dā'ī* in a region. Most Persian Ismaili leaders, in fact, hailed from modest social backgrounds. Hasan-e Sabbāh, by his own extremely austere lifestyle, served as a role model for other Ismaili leaders, who were not accorded special privileges like those enjoyed by Seljuq emirs.

In addition to the fact that Ismaili territories were not subject to the alien rule of the Turks, this all contributed to the early success and popularity of the struggle of the Persians against the Seljuq Turks – popularity that clearly went beyond the support provided by the Ismaili converts themselves, especially as the revolt unfolded initially in the rural areas. In other words, Hasan-e Sabbāh received widespread support from the Persians, who had broadly sympathized with the revolt of the Ismailis because of a variety of socio-economic and political grievances against the order established by the alien Turks. Indeed, without this broad non-Ismaili support in both rural and urban areas, the Persian Ismailis might not have been able to sustain their armed struggle against the far superior military power of the Seljuqs for as long as they did. This support, in fact, made the very survival of the Persian Ismailis possible in the midst of the ardently anti-Shi'i Seljuq dominions.

Once installed at Alamut, Hasan-e Sabbāh improved the fortifications of that old castle, making it virtually impregnable. He then extended his influence throughout Rudbār, and adjacent areas in Daylam, by winning more Ismaili converts as well as sympathizers and acquiring or building more castles, which were fortified systematically. Hasan's religio-political message evoked popular support among the Daylamīs, villagers and highlanders, who were also familiar with various forms of Shi'i Islam, including its Ismaili tradition. Hasan also attracted at least some of the Khorramiyeh or Khorramdiniyeh of Azerbaijan and elsewhere who, as an expression of their Persian sentiments, referred to themselves as *Pārsiyyān*.<sup>7</sup> The Khorramiyeh, it may be added, had remained active in different parts of the Iranian world throughout Abbasid times, manifesting both anti-Arab and anti-Turkish sentiments. In this particular context, Hasan's revolutionary movement may be considered as the inheritor or reviver of the earlier Khorrami movements.

Soon Alamut began to be raided by the forces of the nearest Seljuq emir, Yorum Tāsh, who held the district of Alamut as his *iqṭā'* granted by the sultan. Henceforth, the Persian Ismailis were drawn into direct conflict with the Seljuqs in an endless series of military encounters.<sup>8</sup> In 484 (1091), Hasan-e Sabbāh sent the *dā'ī* Hoseyn Qā'eni to his native Kuhestān (Arabic: Quhistān) in south-eastern Khorāsān to organize activities there. The people of Kuhestān were then under the oppressive rule of a local Seljuq emir, and they responded almost instantly and on a large scale. In what amounted to a popular uprising against the Seljuqs, they seized numerous strongholds as well as several major towns, including Tun, Tabas, Qā'en and Zuzan. Kuhestān thus became the second major territory, after Rudbār, for the activities of Hasan-e Sabbāh and the Persian Ismailis. The Ismailis of Kuhestān were placed under the leadership of a chief local *dā'ī* designated from Alamut and known as *muhtasham*. In two regions, Rudbār and Kuhestān, Hasan had now founded within two years an independent territorial state for the Persian Ismailis and their supporters, challenging Seljuq hegemony.<sup>9</sup> It was in recognition of the rapidly growing Ismaili power – and the inability of the local Seljuq emirs to check it – that in the summer of 485 (1092) Sultan Malekshāh, on the advice of Nezām al-Molk, sent major expeditions against the Ismaili strongholds of both Rudbār and Kuhestān. But these military operations were soon terminated on Nezām al-Molk's assassination in Ramadān 485 (October 1092), followed by Malekshāh's death shortly afterwards in Shawwāl (November) of the same year. Nezām al-Molk was murdered in western Persia as he accompanied Malekshāh to Baghdad. This eminent Sunni vizier was a zealous enemy of the Ismailis, and devoted a long chapter in his *Seyāsat-nāmeḥ* to their condemnation.<sup>10</sup> This may explain why his assassin is generally thought to have been sent by Hasan-e Sabbāh. However, contemporaries seem to have considered the real instigators of this murder to have been Malekshāh himself, who had grown wary of his powerful vizier, as well as the sultan's wife Terken Khātun – a view now endorsed increasingly by modern scholarship on the subject.<sup>11</sup>

On Malekshāh's death in 485 (1092), the Seljuq Empire was thrown into a civil war that lasted for more than a decade, marked by disunity among the deceased sultan's sons and the constant shifting of alliances among the Seljuq emirs who controlled various provinces. There were several claimants to the Seljuq sultanate, Malekshāh's eldest son Barkeyāroq emerging as the most prominent – although Mahmud, the four-year-old son of Malekshāh and Terken Khātun, had immediately been proclaimed sultan. When Mahmud died in 487 (1094), Barkeyāroq was recognized by the Abbasid caliph al-Mustazhir. Sultan Barkeyāroq, whose seat of power was in western Persia and Iraq, devoted most of his time and energy to fighting his half-brother Mohammad Tapar, who was assisted by his own full brother Sanjar, the ruler of Khorāsān and Tokhārestān from 490 (1097) onwards. Peace was not restored to the Seljuq dominions until

Barkeyāroq's death in 498 (1105), when Mohammad Tapar emerged as the undisputed sultan while Sanjar remained at Balkh as his viceroy in the east.

During this period of strife in the Seljuq camp, when various emirs were quarrelling among themselves, Hasan-e Sabbāh found the much-needed respite to consolidate and even extend his power to other parts of Persia. The Persian Ismailis now found even more sympathy for their message of resistance against the alien and oppressive Turkish rulers. They now began to seize more fortresses in widely scattered and inaccessible locations, outside Rudbār and Kuhestān. They seized Gerdkuh, one of the chief Ismaili strongholds in Persia, and a number of lesser castles near Dāmghān, in the region known in medieval times as Qumes. The Ismailis also acquired several fortresses in Arrajān, the border region between the provinces of Fārs and Khuzestān, in south-western Persia. The chief Ismaili leader in that mountainous area of the Zagros range was the *dā'ī* Abu Hamzeh who, like Hasan-e Sabbāh, had spent some time in Egypt to further his Ismaili education. In Rudbār itself, the Ismailis seized more strongholds, including the key fortress of Lamasar, also called Lanbasar, to the west of Alamut. Keyā Bozorg-Omid acquired Lamasar by assault in 489 (1096), and stayed there as commander until he was summoned to Alamut to succeed Hasan-e Sabbāh, in 518 (1124). Bozorg-Omid, one of the most capable Ismaili leaders in Persia, transformed Lamasar into a major stronghold, and the second most important unit in the network of Ismaili castles in Rudbār.

Meanwhile the Ismailis were not only consolidating and extending their positions in Rudbār, Kuhestān and Qumes, as well as in many other mountainous areas of Persia, but were spreading their religio-political message in numerous towns, and had begun to intervene directly even in Seljuq affairs. As a result, they acquired a growing number of supporters in Persian towns, as well as among the Persians in the Seljuq armies. Encouraged by their successes, the Persian Ismailis now directed their attention closer to the seat of Seljuq power in Isfahan.<sup>12</sup> In this area, they were led by the *dā'ī* Ahmad, son of 'Abd al-Malek b. 'Attāsh, who scored a major victory by gaining possession of the fortress of Shāhdez in 494 (1101). Situated strategically on a mountain about eight kilometres to the south of Isfahan, Shāhdez, also called Dezkuh, had been rebuilt by Malekshāh as a key military fortress for guarding the routes to the Seljuq capital. It is reported, perhaps in an exaggerated manner, that Ahmad converted some 30,000 people in the Isfahan area, also collecting taxes in the districts around Shāhdez, to the detriment of the Seljuq treasury. The capture of Shāhdez, a major Ismaili victory in the Ismaili–Seljuq conflict, doubtless dealt a serious blow to the prestige of the Seljuqs. The Ismailis soon acquired a second fortress, Khānlanjān, about 30 kilometres south of Isfahan. With the capture of fortresses in the Isfahan area, the Ismailis became bolder in their revolutionary ventures. Now, they were even able to infiltrate Barkeyāroq's own court and armies. So great was the number of Seljuq soldiers secretly won over to the Ismaili message that some Seljuq officers reportedly asked the

sultan for permission to appear before him in armour for fear of attack by their own soldiers.

The uprising of the Persian Ismailis had, from its commencement, a distinctive pattern and method of struggle, adapted to the power structure of the Seljuq Empire and other circumstances of the time. In particular, Hasan-e Sabbāh's overall strategy was designed in recognition of the decentralized nature of Seljuq rule and their much superior military power. More specifically, after Malekshāh, there was no longer a single all-powerful Seljuq sultan to be uprooted by a large army, even if such a military force could be mobilized by the Persian Ismailis and their sympathizers. In fact, even before Malekshāh's demise, political and military power in the Seljuq sultanate had come to be increasingly localized among numerous military and religious leaders, who were virtually equal, and operated autonomously as loyal Seljuq vassals. Under the circumstances, with a multitude of emirs and commanders of garrisons holding *iqṭā'* assignments throughout the Seljuq dominions, the strategy best suited to the aspirations of a revolutionary movement had also to be decentralized. Hasan-e Sabbāh adopted precisely such a piecemeal strategy in his efforts to undermine Seljuq rule – locality by locality, leader by leader, and from a multitude of impregnable strongholds. Consequently, the Ismaili strategy was based on the seizure of a host of strongholds, from where a multiplicity of simultaneous risings could be launched throughout the Seljuq realm to overwhelm the existing decentralized order from within. Each Ismaili stronghold, normally a fortified mountain fortress, could be used as a local base of armed operations. In special circumstances, the Ismailis would also help one Seljuq emir against another, always considering the overall contribution of such shifting alliances to their own objectives.

The same realities suggested to Hasan-e Sabbāh the use of 'assassination' as an important auxiliary technique for attaining military and political aims. Many earlier Muslim groups, including the Khawārij and some Shi'i *ghulāt*, had used assassination to remove religio-political adversaries. The Seljuqs themselves, like the Crusaders, also assassinated their individual enemies in their factional conflicts. At any rate, Hasan did assign an important role in his strategy of struggle to the selective assassination of prominent religio-political and military opponents, especially as the Ismailis were confronted by an enemy possessing a vastly superior military power. Consequently, this policy became identified in a highly exaggerated manner with the Ismailis of Persia and Syria, so that almost any contemporary assassination of any significance in the central lands of Islam was readily attributed to them. The actual Ismaili assignments were carried out by their *fedā'is*, young self-sacrificing devotees who volunteered for such dangerous missions and rarely survived. The assassinations, normally conducted in public places with intimidating side-effects, targeted those individuals who posed serious threats to Ismaili activities and the survival of the community in specific localities. Contrary to the so-called Assassin legends

fabricated by uninformed Crusader circles and their occidental chroniclers, who erroneously made the Nezāri Ismailis famous in Europe as the Assassins, there is no evidence that hashish was used to motivate the *fedā'is*.<sup>13</sup> From early on, the assassinations, whatever their real source, often triggered massacres of all suspected Ismailis in a particular town or locality; and the massacres, in turn, provoked retaliatory assassinations.

As the revolt of the Persian Ismailis spread, the Fatimid caliph-imam al-Mustansir died in Cairo in 487 (1094). The dispute over his succession split the Ismailis permanently into rival Nezāri and Musta'li factions, named after two of the deceased caliph's sons who claimed his heritage. Al-Mustansir had originally designated Nizār as his heir, but the powerful vizier al-Afdal, who had a few months earlier succeeded his own father Badr al-Jamālī, moved swiftly to place Nizār's much younger brother on the Fatimid throne with the title al-Musta'li bi'llāh. Al-Musta'li was also acknowledged as his father's successor to the imamate by the Egyptian and Yemeni Ismailis, and by some in Syria – that is, by the Ismaili communities under the direct influence of the Fatimid regime. By then, Hasan-e Sabbāh had emerged as the undisputed leader of the Ismailis of Seljuq lands, and he was already following an independent revolutionary policy; the succession dispute provided an opportunity for him to sever relations with the Fatimid regime. Hasan lent his unconditional support to Nizār, who had been deprived of his succession rights, and refused to recognize the authority of the central headquarters of the Ismaili *da'wa* in Cairo, now operating on behalf of the Musta'li cause. By this decision, Hasan-e Sabbāh had in effect founded the independent Nezāri Ismaili *da'wa*, directed centrally from Alamut. Hasan's decision was supported by all the Ismailis of Persia without any dissent, indicating his unquestioned authority over the entire community there. Henceforth, the Ismailis of the Iranian lands (and later those of Syria) came to represent the Nezāri branch of Ismailism, by contrast to the Musta'li branch concentrated in Egypt and Yemen.

Nizār rose in revolt in Egypt, but was defeated and executed in 488 (1095). It is an historical fact that Nizār had male progeny, and some of them rose in revolts against the later Fatimids, claiming the caliphate. At any rate, Hasan-e Sabbāh did not divulge the name of Nizār's successor to the imamate. It is possible that the Ismailis of Persia remained uninformed for quite some time of Nizār's tragic end, and continued to await his reappearance. Nizār's own name continued to be mentioned on coins minted in Alamut in its early period, until about 70 years after his death. In the inscriptions of these coins, Nizār's progeny are generally blessed anonymously.<sup>14</sup> According to Persian historians, already in Hasan-e Sabbāh's time many Nezāri Ismailis believed that a son or grandson of Nizār had been brought from Egypt to Alamut and kept there secretly.<sup>15</sup> At any rate, Hasan and his two immediate successors at Alamut did not name any imams after Nizār. In the absence of a manifest imam, it seems that Hasan-e Sabbāh, now also the head of the Nezāri Ismaili *da'wa*, was

recognized as the *hujja* or full representative and proof of the inaccessible imam, acting as the custodian of the Nezāri *da'wa* until the time of the imam's reappearance.

Ismaili fortunes continued to rise in Persia during Sultan Barkeyāroq's reign. Alarmed by the growing power of the Ismailis, Barkeyāroq in western Persia and Sanjar in Khorāsān finally agreed in 494 (1101) to take combined action against them in their respective territories. Despite new Seljuq offensives and massacres, however, Nezāri Ismailis managed to retain their strongholds and territories. By the time of Barkeyāroq's death in 498 (1105), Hasan-e Sabbāh had already begun to extend his activities to Syria by sending Persian *dā'īs* there. As in Persia, Seljuq rule in Syria had caused many difficulties and was abhorred by Syrians, who also suffered from political fragmentation and internal divisions. But almost half a century of continuous effort would be required before the Nezāri Ismailis could finally gain possession, in the middle of the sixth (twelfth) century, of a network of permanent strongholds in the Jabal Bahrā' region of central Syria.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Tapar had succeeded his brother Barkeyāroq in Persia, while Sanjar remained at Balkh as his viceroy in the east. Sultan Mohammad reigned for some 13 years (498–511 [1105–18]) as the undisputed Seljuq ruler, restoring order to the sultanate. Barkeyāroq and Sanjar had already checked what might have been an Ismaili sweep through Seljuq dominions in Persia. Nevertheless, the Ismailis had maintained their position in widely scattered territories, and posed a continued threat to the Seljuqs. Sultan Mohammad now set out to deal more effectively with the Ismailis. He launched a series of major campaigns against them, and succeeded in checking their expanding activities. As a result, the Ismailis lost most of their strongholds in the Zagros mountains and in Iraq. But Sultan Mohammad's main anti-Ismaili campaign was directed against Shāhdez. The sultan personally laid siege to the fortress of Shāhdez, finally seizing it in 500 (1107).<sup>16</sup> The *dā'ī* Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Malek was captured and executed in Isfahan. Sultan Mohammad Tapar also directed his attention to Rudbār, the main centre of Nezāri Ismaili power in Daylam, with its network of castles. In eight consecutive years, the Seljuqs besieged Alamut, where Hasan-e Sabbāh resided, Lamasar, and other strongholds in Rudbār, destroying the crops of the districts around the castles and engaging in sporadic battles with the Ismailis.<sup>17</sup> Hasan's resistance during these difficult years, when the Seljuqs received regular reinforcements, amazed the enemy. At any rate, despite their superior military power, the Seljuqs failed to take Alamut by assault, and they broke camp on hearing the news of the sultan's death in 511 (1118). Alamut was thus saved once again, and the Nezāri Ismailis of Rudbār were rescued from what could have been an irreversible defeat.

The death of the Great Seljuq Sultan Mohammad Tapar was followed by another period of internal strife and dynastic disputes in the Seljuq camp. This



provided further timely respite for the Nezāri Ismailis, who did in fact recover from some of their earlier setbacks. Mohammad Tapar was succeeded in Isfahan by his son Mahmud (511–25 [1118–31]), who ruled over western Persia and, at least nominally, Iraq. Mahmud faced a number of claimants to the sultanate, often supported by various emirs in Seljuq dominions. In time, three other sons of Mohammad Tapar, including Soleymanshāh (555–6 [1160–1]) – as well as several of his grandsons, some of whom ruled over various parts of the Seljuq domains even during Mahmud's reign – succeeded to the sultanate in the west. However, Mahmud's uncle, Sanjar, who had controlled the eastern provinces, now became generally recognized as the head of the Seljuq family and as supreme sultan, until his death in 552 (1157), when the sultanate of the Great Seljuqs began to disintegrate. Sultan Sanjar now also controlled important territories in northern Persia, including Tabarestān and Qumes, which were already penetrated by the Nezāri Ismailis.

By the final years of Hasan-e Sabbāh, who died after a brief illness in 518 (1124), Ismaili–Seljuq relations, as observed by Marshall Hodgson, had in effect entered a new phase of 'stalemate'.<sup>18</sup> The great Seljuq offensives against the Ismailis had clearly ended on Mohammad Tapar's death. The Seljuqs had failed to uproot the Persian Ismailis from their strongholds in Rudbār, Qumes and Kuhestān. At the same time, the anti-Seljuq revolt of the Ismailis had lost its effectiveness. For almost three decades the Ismailis had carried out an open revolt in the heart of the Seljuq lands. But they had also sustained severe blows. In particular, their partisans in the cities had been frequently massacred, damaging their urban bases of support, and they had also lost many of their fortresses in the Alborz and Zagros mountains and around Isfahan. The remaining Ismaili strongholds, now located only in Rudbār, Qumes and Kuhestān, could not serve as adequate bases for renewed revolutionary activities in Persia. But the Ismaili revolt had succeeded on a local basis in several scattered territories, while the Persian Ismailis maintained their cohesion.

Henceforth, the Persian Ismailis were more concerned with consolidating their power and defending the territories and networks of strongholds that they held, rather than engaging in further military actions against the Seljuqs, while the Seljuqs no longer conducted any large-scale offensives against the Ismaili fortress communities. In this period of stalemate, or even peaceful coexistence, which lasted until the end of Seljuq rule over Persia, the Nezāri Ismaili community transformed itself into an autonomous state, taking its place as a principality within the Seljuq Empire. This state was ruled, after Hasan-e Sabbāh, by two other *dā'īs*, Keyā Bozorg-Omid (518–32 [1124–38]) and then his son Mohammad (532–57 [1138–62]), before the Nezāri imams themselves emerged openly at Alamut and took charge of the affairs of their state, *da'wa* and community. Ironically, this Nezāri state outlasted the demise of the Seljuq sultanate itself in 590 (1194). Seljuq rule was finally uprooted not by the

Ismailis but by another dynasty of Turkish origins, the Khwārazmshāhs. By then, a spiritual *qiyāma* or resurrection had been proclaimed by the Nezāri imam for his community, which in effect also made the ‘outside world’ irrelevant. Henceforth, the Nezāri Ismailis became psychologically independent, at least for a while, of all their Sunni adversaries.

The Ismaili state in Persia, which lasted for some 166 years until it was uprooted by the all-conquering Mongols in 654 (1256), owed its very existence to Hasan-e Sabbāh, a remarkable organizer and political strategist. He maintained a sense of purpose and dedication despite periodic setbacks, and saw the independent Nezāri Ismaili state and *da‘wa* he had founded through their extremely turbulent early decades. With his exceptional leadership qualities and charisma, Hasan-e Sabbāh personally offered a rallying point for other Nezāri Ismailis. He also provided a religio-political frame that was to serve as an appropriate response to the challenges of the time, enabling the Nezāri Ismailis to survive under incredibly adverse circumstances and in widely scattered territories stretching from eastern Persia to Syria.

## Notes:

1. See F. Daftary, 'Persian Historiography of the Early Nizārī Ismā'īlīs', *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 30 (1992), pp. 91–7, reprinted in his *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies* (London, 2005), pp. 107–23.
2. 'Atā-Malek Juvayni, *Ta'rikh-e jahān-goshā*, ed. M. Qazvini (Leiden/London, 1912–37), III, pp. 187ff, transl. J. A. Boyle as *The History of the World-Conqueror* (Manchester, 1958), II, pp. 666ff; Rashid al-Din Fazl Allāh, *Jāme' al-tavārikh: qesmat-e Esmā'īleyān*, ed. M. T. Dāneshpazhuh and M. Modarresi Zanjāni (Tehran, 1338 [1959]), pp. 97ff (ed. M. Rowshan [Tehran, 1387 (2008)], pp. 98ff); 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alī Kāshāni, *Zobdat al-tavārikh: bakhsh-e Fātemeyān va Nezāreyān*, ed. M. T. Dāneshpazhuh (Tehran, 1366 [1987], 2nd edn), pp. 133ff.
3. See al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *Sīrat al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn dā'ī al-du'āt*, ed. M. Kāmil Husayn (Cairo, 1949), especially pp. 94–184; Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn b. al-Hasan, *Uyūn al-akhbār*, VII, ed. Ayman F. Sayyid, with summary English transl. by P. E. Walker and M. A. Pomerantz, *The Fatimids and their Successors in Yaman* (London, 2002), Arabic text pp. 48–74; V. Klemm, *Memoirs of a Mission: The Ismaili Scholar, Statesman and Poet al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī* (London, 2003), pp. 78–86; and P. E. Walker, 'Purloined Symbols of the Past: The Theft of Souvenirs and Sacred Relics in the Rivalry between the Abbasids and the Fatimids', in F. Daftary and J. W. Meri, eds, *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung* (London, 2003), pp. 364–87, reprinted in his *Fatimid History and Ismaili Doctrine* (Aldershot, 2008), article VIII.
4. Professor C. Edmund Bosworth has written extensively on the revival of Persian culture under Arab and Turkish rule. See particularly his 'The Development of Persian Culture under the Early Ghaznawids', *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 6 (1968), pp. 33–144, reprinted in his *The Medieval History of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia* (London, 1977), and his *The History of the Saffarids of Sistan and the Maliks of Nimruz (247 [861] to 949 [1542–43])* (Costa Mesa, CA/New York, 1994), pp. 168–80. See also W. Madelung, 'The Assumption of the Title Shāhānshāh by the Būyids and the Reign of the Daylam (*Dawlat al-Daylam*)', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 28 (1969), pp. 84–108, 168–83, reprinted in his *Religious and Ethnic Movements in Islam* (Hampshire, 1992), article VIII.
5. Rashid al-Din, *Jāme' al-tavārikh*, ed. Dāneshpazhuh, p. 112 (ed. Rowshan, p. 111); Kāshāni, *Zobdat al-tavārikh*, p. 148.
6. W. Ivanow, ed., *Haft bāb-e Bābā Sayyednā*, in his *Two Early Ismaili Treatises* (Bombay, 1933), p. 30.
7. Rashid al-Din, *Jāme' al-tavārikh*, ed. Dāneshpazhuh, pp. 149–53 (ed. Rowshan, pp. 147–50); Kāshāni, *Zobdat al-tavārikh*, pp. 186–90; W. Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (Albany, NY, 1988), pp. 9–12.
8. For an overview of these encounters, and the anti-Ismaili biases of the sources relating them, see Carole Hillenbrand, 'The Power Struggle Between the Saljuqs and the Isma'īlis of Alamūt, 487–518 (1094–1124): The Saljuq Perspective', in F. Daftary, ed., *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 205–20.

9. For descriptions of Alamut and other Ismaili strongholds in Rudbār and Kuhestān, see P. Willey, *Eagle's Nest: Ismaili Castles in Iran and Syria* (London, 2005), pp. 102–46, 167–203. Peter Willey (1922–2009) devoted his life to studying, and leading expeditions to, the medieval Ismaili castles, and produced the best descriptions of these strongholds and their defensive features. He was also responsible for identifying the precise location of several of these castles. His field research revealed that the Ismailis of the Alamut period possessed an accomplished mastery of military architecture and mountain agriculture, together with an ability to ensure ample reserves of food and water in their fortress communities.
10. Nezām al-Molk, *Seyar al-molūk (Seyāsāt-nāmeḥ)*, ed. H. Darke (Tehran, 1347 [1968], 2nd edn), pp. 282–311; ed. Mehmet Altay Köymen (Ankara, 1999), pp. 227–52, transl. H. Darke as *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings* (London, 1978, 2nd edn), pp. 208–31. This work was completed in 484 [1091], with 11 more chapters (including Chapter 46 on the Ismailis) added in the following year, shortly before the vizier's assassination. These final 11 chapters focus on dangers that threatened the Seljuq state, notably those emanating from certain Khorrami movements in Persia and from the Ismailis (Bātenis). On the authorship of the *Seyar al-molūk*, see Alexey Khismatulin's essay in the present volume.
11. See, for instance, Carole Hillenbrand, '1092: A Murderous Year', *The Arabist: Budapest Studies in Arabic* 15–16 (1995), pp. 281–96; and H. Bowen and C. E. Bosworth, 'Nizām al-Mulk', *EI2* 8, pp. 69–73.
12. See Zahir al-Din Nishāpuri, *Saljuq-nāmeḥ*, ed. I. Afshār (Tehran, 1332 [1953]), pp. 40–1 (ed. A. H. Morton, *Saljuqnāma* [Chippenham, 2004], p. 46); Mohammad b. 'Alī al-Rāvandi, *Rāhat al-sodur*, ed. M. Eqbāl (London, 1921), pp. 155ff. See also Caro O. Minasian, *Shah Diz of Isma'ili Fame* (London, 1971); S. M. Stern, E. Beazley and A. Dobson, 'The Fortress of Khān Lanjān', *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 9 (1971), pp. 45–57; Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, pp. 206–12; and D. Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers: A History of Isfahān in the Saljuq Period* (London/New York, 2010), pp. 157–62, where the author argues for an earlier date (490 [1096–7]) for the Ismaili capture of Shāhdez.
13. For these legends, all revolving around the recruitment and training of the *fedā'is*, see F. Daftary, *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Isma'ilis* (London, 1994), especially pp. 88–127; and his *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge, 2007, 2nd edn), pp. 10–30.
14. See Paul Casanova, 'Monnaie des Assassins de Perse', *Revue Numismatique*, 3rd series, 11 (1893), pp. 343–52; George C. Miles, 'Coins of the Assassins of Alamūt', *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 3 (1972), pp. 155–62; and H. Hamdan and A. Vardanyan, 'Ismaili Coins from the Alamūt Period', in Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, pp. 288–307.
15. See Juvayni, *Ta'riḫ-e jahān-goshā*, III, pp. 180–1, 231–7 (transl. Boyle, II, pp. 663, 691–5); Rashid al-Din, *Jāme' al-tavāriḫ*, ed. Dāneshpazhuh, pp. 79, 166–8 (ed. Rowshan, pp. 77, 163–4); Kāshāni, *Zobdat al-tavāriḫ*, pp. 115, 202–4; and Ibn al-Qalānisi, *Dhayl ta'riḫ Dimashq*, ed. H. F. Amedroz (Leiden, 1908), pp. 127–9.
16. Rashid al-Din, *Jāme' al-tavāriḫ*, ed. Dāneshpazhuh, pp. 121–2 (ed. Rowshan, pp. 120–1); Kāshāni, *Zobdat al-tavāriḫ*, pp. 156–7; Ibn al-Qalānisi, *Dhayl ta'riḫ Dimashq*, pp. 151–6; Zahir al-Din Nishāpuri, *Saljuq-nāmeḥ*, pp. 41–2 (ed. Morton, pp. 48–50); al-Rāvandi, *Rāhat al-sodur*, pp. 158–61; al-Fath b. 'Alī al-Bondāri, *Zobdat al-nosrah*, ed. M. T. Houtsma (Leiden, 1889), pp. 90–1; and Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites*, pp. 172–81.
17. Juvayni, *Ta'riḫ-e jahān-goshā*, III, pp. 211–12 (transl. Boyle, II, pp. 680–1); Rashid al-Din, *Jāme' al-tavāriḫ*, ed. Dāneshpazhuh, pp. 124–32 (ed. Rowshan, pp. 123–30); Kāshāni, *Zobdat al-tavāriḫ*, pp. 160–6.

18. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizārī Ismā‘īlīs against the Islamic World* (The Hague, 1955), pp. 99ff, 145; and his ‘The Ismā‘īlī State’, in J. A. Boyle, *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 5: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 428, 447ff.

## What does the History of Isfahan tell us about Iranian Society during the Seljuq Period?

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Scholars working on the history of Iran during the eleventh and twelfth centuries have focused more on the role played by the Turks (their conquest, their dynastic feuds, their army, the *iqṭā'* system) than on that of the Iranians (by this term I mean the non-Turkic populations living in Iran prior to the Seljuq conquest).<sup>1</sup> The latter have been the subject of studies dealing with the administration (in which they are presented as auxiliaries of the Turks), the Ismaili uprising (in which they are seen as resistant to the Turks) and exceptional individuals such as mystics and men of religion (for example, Abū Hāmid Ghazālī, Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī) or poets (for example, Amīr Mu'izzī).<sup>2</sup> Interesting as they may be, these studies deal with extreme and/or particular cases, and cannot represent what happened to Iranian society as a whole. For that purpose, it seemed more fruitful to investigate not an individual actor or institution, but instead a local framework.<sup>3</sup> My assumption was that such a framework could be used as a filter to approach the vast, difficult and under-investigated bodies of available sources, and to obtain results that would have been missed through a focus on the 'imperial level'. In other words, it could provide a valid *perspective* for looking at the period, and for going beyond generalizations. It was the subject of my doctoral research and a subsequent book. The aim of this essay is to present in the simplest way possible what I consider the three main results of this research, and the ways in which I have developed it in recent years.<sup>4</sup>

### *The City and the Ordo*

As might have been expected, my research started with disappointment. When I embarked on this project, I wanted to investigate the daily relations between the Iranians and the 'Barbarians', as Bosworth has termed the Turks.<sup>5</sup> Since the Great Seljuqs were said to have chosen it as their 'capital',<sup>6</sup> Isfahan seemed the ideal setting. But I rapidly realized that they did not have a very close relationship, for a simple reason: they did not live in the same place. This came

as a surprise, because Ann Lambton had clearly stated on several occasions that the Seljuqs ‘had settled capitals’ and ‘did not, like the Mongols, live in tented encampments apart from the local population’.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the sources on Isfahan showed just the contrary. The Seljuqs are not seen inside the cities, but rather in an encampment called ‘*askar*, *mu’askar*, *mukhayyam* in Arabic, *lashkargāh* in Persian (the Seljuqs themselves probably used the Turkic word *ordū*, meaning both camp and army, but it is not recorded in the sources of that period).<sup>8</sup>

In peacetime, the sources speak on numerous occasions of the camp of Malikshāh and his son Muhammad as being ‘in Isfahan’: *bi-Isfahān*. But this expression is highly ambiguous since it could designate the city of Isfahan itself, its larger hinterland (that is, the valley of the Zāyanda-Rūd) or the province as a whole, with a radius of approximately 150 kilometres around Isfahan. Although no sources say it explicitly, the location of the royal camp at Isfahan was probably located on the south-western side of the wall that had surrounded the city since the beginning of the eleventh century (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

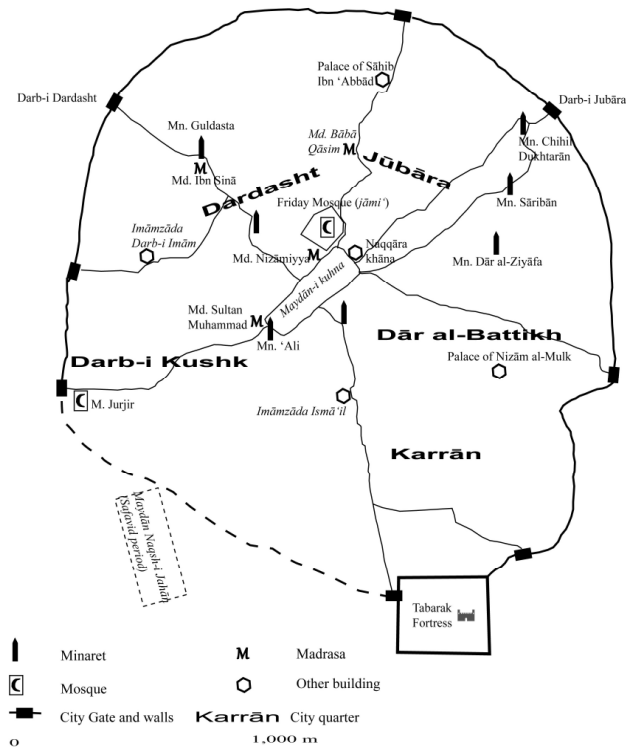


Fig. 4.1 Isfahan in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (modified from Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites*).

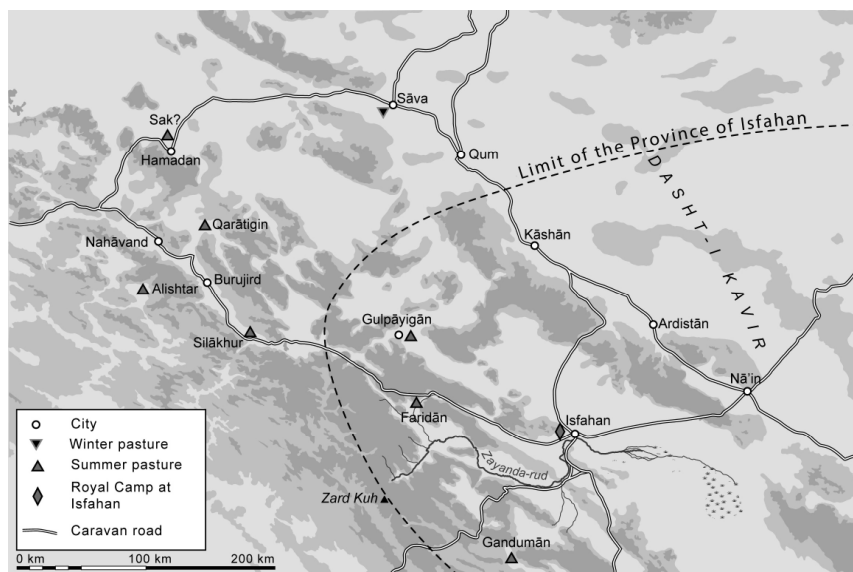


Fig. 4.2 Access to Isfahan.

This part of Isfahan's immediate vicinity was the greenest, and for this very reason has traditionally been favoured by well-off Isfahanis for their extra-urban residences. The ruin of the nearby suburb of Vīd-Ābād, immediately outside the western wall, during the siege of the city by Toghril Beg, may have made the reconfiguration of the area easier. Another clue is the presence in the same location of the *maydān* – that is, the large open space used for polo games and military parades, and a key feature of the cities dominated by the Turks in the Muslim East (the *maydān* that became the centre of Shah 'Abbās's capital in the sixteenth century probably dated back to the Seljuq period).

Although the camp could be set up on the fringe of Isfahan, it was not always to be found there. The Seljuqs moved with the seasons. These seasonal travels were called *kūch*, a Turkic word that entered Persian vocabulary during the Seljuq period. While in spring the lower part of the Zāyanda-Rūd (including the vicinity of Isfahan) could provide a suitable location, in summer, higher and cooler spots to the south or west were naturally preferred: among the favourites were the valley of Gandumān (still used by the Safavids and the Qajars), the high plain of Gulpāyagān and the many pastures on the road to Hamadān – e.g. Sīlahkhur (modern Du-rūd), Alīshtar, Qarā-Tigīn (near modern Malāyir), Sak (maybe modern Bahār), and beyond (see Figure 4.3).<sup>9</sup> These summer pastures (or *aylāq*, from Turkic *yaylay*, from *yaj*, summer) had the advantage of being at the same time remote from the major zones of agriculture and perfectly suited to feed the many mounts, as well as the livestock necessary for the royal travels.



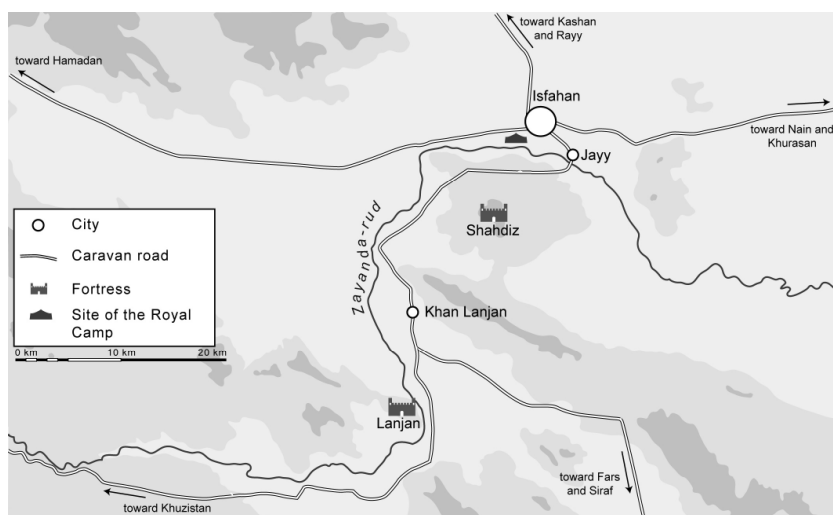


Fig. 4.3 Royal pastures in the province of Isfahan.

The tent retained paramount importance in the Seljuq camp. The private space (*haram*) of the sultan was delimited by a cloth enclosure called a *sarāparda* in the Persian sources, corresponding to the *surādiq* of the Arabic sources. The sultan himself lived in a treillis tent – that is the Türkmen tent made up of a foldable wooden structure and a felt covering (this tent, corresponding to the Turkic *oĭ*, is called *khargāh* in the contemporary sources). The entrance of the *sarāparda* was apparently occupied by a small guyed tent (i.e. a tent sustained by ropes), called a *dihlīz*. Nearby, a *nawbatī* tent lodged the guard and served for the *nawba* ceremony (the military salute played for the sultan). On the site of the royal camp at Isfahan, buildings called *kūshk* were at the disposal of the sultan.<sup>10</sup> From what is known from the better-documented case of Hamadān, *kūshks* seem to have been rather light structures of one or two storeys (the term eventually became ‘kiosk’ in the European languages). Although sources are very scarce, I do not think that the *kūshks* were designed to serve as dwellings, but rather as venues for special occasions – in particular, receptions. The *kūshk* was most probably associated with some element of tentage, as it has been the case in later and better documented Timurid courts. When no *kūshk* was available (they seem to have been limited to the vicinities of the urban centres important to the Seljuqs, like Isfahan, Hamadan, Sāva, Marv and Baghdad), the sultan held audience in a *bārgāh* tent. I doubt it is a coincidence if the Seljuq dome of the Friday Mosque in Golpāyagān is reminiscent of a tent, since the surrounding area was a favourite summer pasture of the Seljuqs.<sup>11</sup>

While the legacy of the nomadic past is unquestionable, this does not mean that the Seljuqs were not interested in cities. They drew most of their revenues from them, and appointed emirs to oversee their interests (Turks bearing the title of *shihna* who, in the case of Isfahan, controlled the citadel of Tabarak). But they do not seem to have needed or wanted to live inside cities; and because of this spatial and cultural divide between the court and the city, the sultan and his court remained rather distant figures for the Isfahanis. In these circumstances, we should ask: What did ‘Seljuq domination’ actually mean for them?

### *The Khurasani Takeover*

The Seljuq conquests led, for the first time since the Sasanians, to a political reunification of Iran by a dynasty ruling from the plateau. But it was not a happy reunification, perhaps because the word ‘reunification’ itself encourages us to think that there was something to unify, and here we touch on the very powerful but elusive notion of Iranian identity or Iranianness (in French: *iranité*, German: *Iranität*), which has inspired this collection of essays.

The great central deserts constituted more than a mere geographical divide. Western Iran (where Isfahan lies) seems to have many more links with central Mesopotamia than with eastern Iran (Khurasan). It was of course not by chance that the two regions were both called Iraq (‘Persian Iraq’ for western Iran, ‘Arab Iraq’ for central Mesopotamia). They were both ruled by the same dynasty (the Dailami Buyids), but this was a more than merely political unity, which can be shown by highlighting other factors – such as the flux of scholars, the diffusion of religious trends (Hanbalism, for example) or the strength of cultural models. To take but one example, the Isfahani elite do not seem to have been much impressed by the rise of the New Persian language in Khurasan. They spoke a form of Persian, of course (with apparently the same intonations as today, if we believe Maqdisi’s report); but as far as culture was concerned the benchmark was still in Baghdad, where Arabic reigned supreme. We should therefore not be surprised to see that the first major work written in Persian in Isfahan before the arrival of the Seljuqs was the *Dānishnāma* of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) – an exile from Khurasan.<sup>12</sup>

To the Isfahanis, the Seljuq conquest could not but look like the conclusion of several attempts made by states based in Khurasan (the Samanids, then the Ghaznavids) to annex it. The presence of the Khurasanis in the new state was overwhelming: the viziers of the Seljuqs were Khurasanis, the heads of the central divans were Khurasanis, and the key functions at the local level were given to Khurasanis. In Isfahan, Toghril Beg appointed as governor a secretary from Nishapur (best remembered as the dedicatee of the epic poem *Vīs-u-Rāmīn*), and as qadi a Hanafi *faqīh* from Bukhara. When Hasan of Tūs, alias Nizām al-Mulk, took control of the vizierate in 1063, the takeover gained momentum. His network stretched across the key territories ruled by the Great

Seljuqs, with the notable exception of Azerbaijan (see Figure 4.4). But the heart of his network was Isfahan. Everywhere Nizām relied on nepotism, madrasa foundation and political alliances (reinforced by marriage) to extend his influence, but nowhere was his action more coordinated and noticeable than in Isfahan. While the Seljuqs remained outside the walls, he and his family conspicuously settled right in the middle of the city, between the Friday Mosque and the citadel of Tabarak. He gave the position of governor to his own son, and took possession of the fortress of Khān Lanjān, a key military stronghold, which enabled him to monitor most of the trade circulation in the valley (see Figure 4.2). Lastly, he funded and richly endowed a madrasa to teach the Shāfi‘ī *fiqh* (which was predominant in Isfahan) and a *khānaqāh* for the Sufis (whose influence continued to increase), both of which he entrusted to Khurasanis whom he had summoned to Isfahan (Muhammad Khujandī and Sayyid Muhammad Nishāpūrī, respectively).

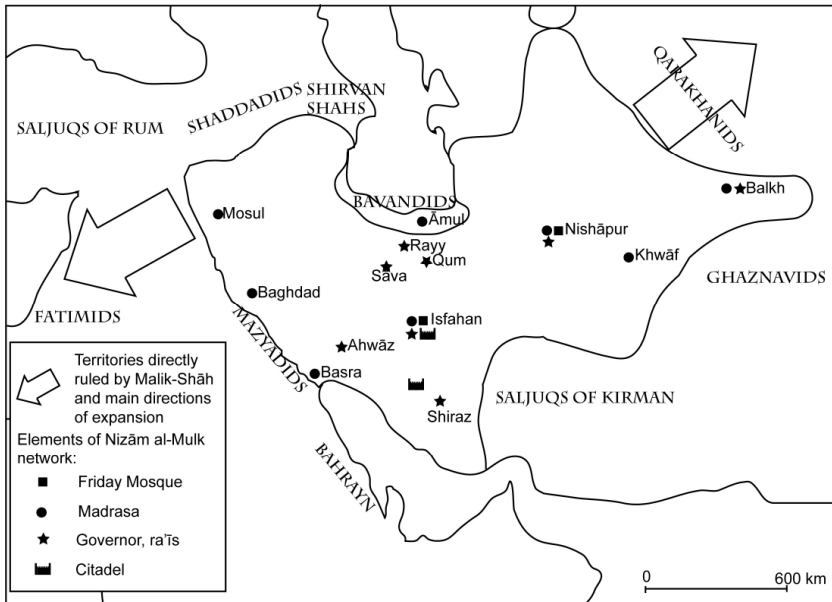


Fig. 4.4 Nizām al-Mulk's network.

With virtually unlimited power and huge financial means, Nizām al-Mulk commanded considerable influence within the local society. It does not seem exaggerated to say that he 'owned' Isfahan. The madrasa and the *khānaqāh* were his key tools in building and fostering loyalties through allowances, supplemented by donations of cash and land, enabling him to become the first notable of the city.<sup>13</sup> A very interesting example is that of Mufazzal Māfarrūkhī, an *adīb* from an old Isfahani family going back to the Sasanians,

and which had served the Buyids. If not a Shi'ī, Māfarrūkhī was very probably of Mu'tazilī inclination, and does not seem to have enjoyed the company of the ulama and the Sufis. The contrast with Nizām al-Mulk could hardly be more vivid. Nevertheless Māfarrūkhī was a client of Nizām al-Mulk's family, and dedicated his *Mahāsin Isfahān* to Nizām al-Mulk's son. In this work Māfarrūkhī paints the Seljuq period as continuous with the Buyid era, and at the same time as the fulfilment of Isfahan's 'manifest destiny' to shine in the Muslim East.<sup>14</sup>

That a ruler sought to strengthen his local influence by promoting elites to whom he felt closer, and whom he therefore thought more likely to defend his interests, was not new. The case of the Burhānī of Marv, installed by Sanjar in Bukhara, is well-known.<sup>15</sup> What is less common (and may indeed be unique) in Isfahan was the visibility enjoyed by these foreign elites, and the extent of the upheaval of the former hierarchies. I believe it was because the influence of the ultra-powerful vizier was here at its highest, not diminished as it was elsewhere by the eroding effect of distance, or by competing powers. (In Baghdad, where the Abbasid caliph backed the Hanbalīs in resisting Nizām al-Mulk's schemes, the situation was markedly different.) In return, this unique situation was to create unique tensions. No matter what the extent of the redistribution of wealth, it could not hope to make everybody happy, and although the Nizāmiyya networks integrated members of the old elites (like the Māfarrūkhīs), they were clearly controlled by Khurasanis, as were the divans. Nothing indicated that this was going to change. This is how I have interpreted the strengthening of Ismailism in Isfahan during the vizierate of Nizām al-Mulk. I have argued that, since the city was totally in Nizām al-Mulk's grip, opposition could not be manifested openly, as for example in Baghdad, and had to go underground – something for which the Ismaili structure was particularly suited. The ferocity of the struggle within the local society in the period *following* the death of Nizām al-Mulk – a struggle unparalleled in any other Iranian city – was directly proportional to the intensity of the efforts made by the Seljuq authorities to reshape the local society in the previous decades. In other words, this Ismaili uprising in Isfahan 'reveals' (to take up a formula used by Jürgen Paul about the Mongol invasion) the structure of the society, as well as the tensions to which it was submitted.<sup>16</sup>

### *The Two Levels of Struggle*

The last point I would like to address is how we can make sense of the nearly 150 years separating the deaths of Nizām al-Mulk and Malikshāh (1092) from the Mongol conquest (1235–6). This period has a markedly negative image: an Age of Decline after the Golden Age (Bosworth speaks of a 'zenith'<sup>17</sup>) represented by Nizām al-Mulk's vizierate. Such a vision actually dates back to the twelfth century itself, and happens to have been developed by Isfahani exiles in the Arab world (Anūshirvān b. Khālid, 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī,

Abū l-Fath al-Bundārī) trying to make sense of the new context (crumbling Seljuq authority, internal warfare) which had led them to leave Iran.<sup>18</sup> And despite the valuable spadework done by Sanaullah, Luther and Bosworth on the political history, the multiplicity of the actors and the extreme confusion of the chronological framework in the chronicles (to an extent unparalleled in the history of Iran, except maybe during the eighteenth century) have combined to keep scholars away.<sup>19</sup> Things become much clearer when we focus not only on the imperial level (where Seljuq princes, or the atabeg emirs acting in their name, fought continuously among themselves), but also on the local level. It is possible to integrate these two levels into an explanatory model: in both fields we can identify antagonistic networks fighting for control of resources and symbols of authority, and developing alliances outside their field to strengthen their position. I have tried to give a graphic representation of this model (Figure 4.5), and the following paragraphs can be read as an explanation of this figure.

In Isfahan, the resources available were the revenues generated by agriculture and trade. As is now well established, the policy of the Seljuqs was to support long-distance trade in order to generate tax revenues through customs duties (*mukūs*) and urban trade taxes (*rusum*, etc.).<sup>20</sup> Isfahan, which was located not only in the highly productive valley of the Zāyanda-Rūd, but also at the crossroads of the major trading routes linking central and eastern Iran to the great ports on the Persian Gulf (Basra and Sīrāf), generated huge revenues. This unique location is key to an understanding of the power of the Kakuyid state (a Dailami dynasty ruling Isfahan able to resist the mighty Ghaznavids effectively) in the first half of the eleventh century, and of the Seljuqs' motivation to maintain direct control over Isfahan until the very end.

While the resources remained unchanged throughout the period (at least in nature if not in quantity), the actors did change. Under the Buyids, the main rivalry on the local political field opposed the Mu'tazilīs (close to the Buyids) and the Hanbalīs (led by the family Ibn Manda). After the Seljuq conquest, as we have seen, the cards were entirely reshuffled: new 'Khurasani' networks were created from scratch, but these initiatives in turn generated tremendous tensions that fuelled Ismailism. In 1092 the power vacuum caused in Isfahan by the deaths, in quick succession, of Nizām al-Mulk and Malikshāh allowed the Ismailis, headed by Ahmad Ibn 'Attāsh, to challenge the dominant position of the Khurasani networks. Thanks to the capture of the valley's two key military positions (the fortresses of Khān Lanjān and Shāhdīz), the Ismailis were able to appropriate the revenues of the land as well as the caravans. Directly threatened, the Khurasani networks fought back (I should repeat that this appellation does not imply that they were composed exclusively of Khurasanis, but merely that the latter occupied the higher positions). They eventually managed to eliminate the Ismailis inside Isfahan, and later to force them out of the citadels. The Khujandī family, which headed the Nizāmiyya madrasa, was

at the forefront of this battle. Such a struggle could take place only because, at the imperial level, various Seljuq contenders (Tutush, Terken Khatun and her son Mahmūd, Öner, Berk Yaruq, Muhammad) were busy fighting each other for the sultanate. The heads of the Khurasani networks allied themselves with one of these imperial actors, Muhammad b. Malikshāh, and thanks to his military manpower, the fortresses were eventually taken. As for his half-brother and rival Berk Yaruq, he may have formed an alliance of convenience with the Ismailis of Isfahan (these are the relations A–B and A'–B' in Figure 4.5a).<sup>21</sup>

This pattern – of antagonistic networks on the local field developing alliances at the imperial level – also fits the next period very well. After their victory over the Ismailis, the Khujandīs emerged as the great winners of the war, during which they had acquired both resources (the control of the *waqfs*) and legitimacy. The main actors at the imperial and local levels supported each other (relation A–B

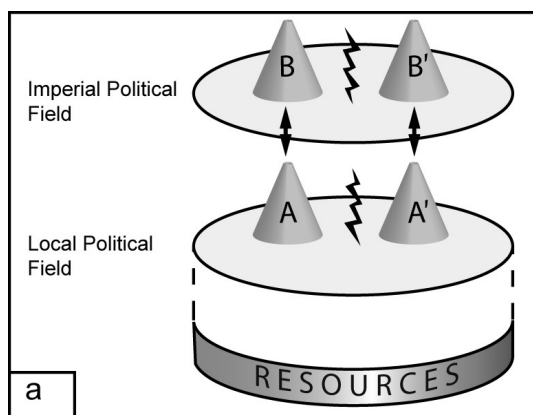


Fig. 4.5a Typology of relations between actors of the imperial and local political fields.

in Figure 4.5b). The agreement between the sultan and the Khujandīs can be encapsulated in the formula: 'I recognize your prominent position in Isfahan by appointing you to the *riyāsa* (i.e. the position of *ra'īs*), thereby making you my main interlocutor, in exchange for which you recognize my authority and will ensure that the taxes are raised'. The Khujandīs needed the sultan because, in a context of Turkish (and later Turko-Mongol) military supremacy, no urban-based state could survive for long. As for the sultan, he needed intermediaries like the Khujandīs because his power was much weaker than that of the three first Seljuq sultans – and also, because of this very weakness, he had to abandon Isfahan for strategically better-located seats of power. As Baghdad, Hamadān and Marv (and later Khwārazm and Nakhchavān) became the main residences of imperial actors, as the sultan visited Isfahan less and less frequently (Mas'ūd came only once during his 18-year sultanate), the importance of the local political field increased.

Does this mean that there remained only one actor (the Khujandīs) at the local level? No, because simultaneously each of the 'partners' tried to diminish their dependence on the other. The Seljuqs aimed to achieve leverage in the local political field by strengthening the Hanafī community. For this they relied

on exactly the same methods used by Nizām al-Mulk in the century before: the foundation and endowment of madrasas (now teaching Hanafī *fiqh*) and the political backing of the leading family (the Saʿīds). These initiatives can be interpreted as proof of the growing integration of the Seljuqs into the Iranian sphere – something that the first sultans had not achieved,

for lack of necessity or interest.<sup>22</sup> On their side, and for diametrically opposite reasons, the Khujandīs also formed alliances with actors at the imperial level. They built an increasingly strong strategic partnership with the ‘born-again’ Abbasid state. They also made alliances of convenience with various Seljuq, and later non-Seljuq, contenders (relations B–A’ and A–B’ in Figure 4.5b). The multiplication of the actors in the imperial field increased the possibility of alliances. In 1133 the Khujandīs chose Masʿūd b. Muhammad against his brother Toghril, in 1147 Muhammad b. Mahmūd against the same Masʿūd, and in 1187 Toghril b. Arslan against the Eldigüzid Atabeg Qizil Arslan. Despite their endeavours, the Khujandīs lost ground to their rivals the Saʿīds, who replaced them as *raʿīs* in the aftermath of the Khwārazmian conquest of 1194. The weight acquired by the Hanafī community inside Isfahan made this political switch sustainable.<sup>23</sup> By that time the division of the Isfahan political field had become physical. The quarters of Dardasht and Jūbāra, which were respectively the bases of the Khujandīs and the Saʿīds, were probably separated by walls (walls separating rival communities already existed in tenth-century Baghdad). To contemporaries, Dardasht and Jūbāra became metonyms for the two networks, as in the famous (and maybe apocryphal) lamentations of the Sufi poet Kamāl al-Dīn Ismāʿīl (d. 1237) at the beginning of the thirteenth century:

*Tā Dardasht hast u Jūbāra, nīst az kūshish u kushish chāra / ay Khudāvand-i haft sayyāra, pādshāhi firist khūnkhwāra / tā Dardasht-rā chū dasht kunad / jūy-i khūn rānad ū zi Jūbāra / ‘adad-i har du’ishān biyafzāyad / har yakī-rā kunad sad pāra.*

As long as Dardasht and Jūbāra exist, there will be no respite from strife and killing / Oh Lord of the Seven Heavens, send a bloodthirsty king, to turn Dardasht into a (bare) plain, and to make a river of blood flow from

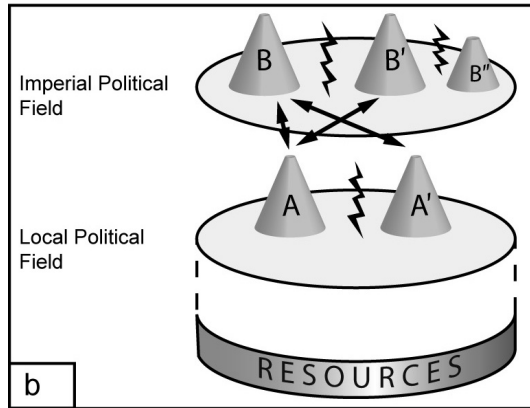


Fig. 4.5b Typology of relations.

Jūbāra / May he multiply the number of both of them, by cutting each one into a hundred pieces.<sup>24</sup>

As the situation became more open, it also became more volatile and dangerous, especially after the death of Atabeg Pahlavān in 1181, which marked the waning of the authority of the Eldigüzid atabegs over western Iran. The tendency of the antagonistic networks of Isfahan to develop alliances outside their field finally led to disaster, when the Mongols arrived. Perhaps overconfident in their capacity to instrumentalize the newcomers, some Shāfi‘ī leaders (probably led by the Khujandīs) might have proposed to the Mongol general Chormaghun an alliance against their Hanafī rivals. If we are to believe the account given by Ibn Abī l-Hadīd, as soon as the Shāfi‘īs opened the gates of Isfahan, the Mongols perpetrated a general massacre, destroying both factions. The local political field was, for a time, not only neutralized but wiped out.

### *Conclusion: The Idea of Iran and the History of Iran*

I would like to finish by reflecting on these results to see how they can help to fuel the discussion on the ‘Idea of Iran’. Taking into consideration different levels of struggle (imperial, regional or local) allows us to go beyond the opposition between ‘dominating’ and ‘dominated’ echoed not only among Iranians today, but still in some sections of scholarship – especially when it comes to opposing the Buyids, a western variation of the ‘Iranian interlude’, to the Seljuqs.<sup>25</sup> The Iranians cannot be considered the victims of an historical process (Turkish domination). There was no such thing as Turkish domination: there was a process of domination involving Turks and Iranians, in which the Turks were but one player. In that context, independence does not mean much. In Isfahan the Seljuqs needed the Khujandīs just as the Khujandīs needed the Seljuqs (the same relationship would later link the Khwārazmshāhs and the Sa‘īds). Rather, we could speak of symbiosis if that term did not imply coexistence – which did not pertain, since each of the actors occupied different spaces. For this reason I prefer to speak of interdependence. The only time it ceased to apply was when Nizām al-Mulk settled in Isfahan: the distance between the imperial and the local fields (an apparently basic requirement for this model to function) was then abolished, leading to a brutal reshaping of the local field (Figure 4.5c). Is there something genuinely new in all of this? It is not obvious that there is. When the Arabs invaded Iran, one of the leading families of Rayy (the Zīnabīs) allied themselves with them in order to put an end to the domination of their local rivals (the Mihrān).<sup>26</sup> In Nishapur, the Karrāmiyya were allied with the Ghaznavids against the local *patriciat*.<sup>27</sup> And after the Mongol period, the local political field of Isfahan took shape along new lines: Sunnis versus Shi‘is in the fourteenth century, and Ni‘matallāhīs versus Haydarīs in the sixteenth century.<sup>28</sup> In other words, the actors may have been different, but their actions remained similar. Thanks to Seljuq rule, they



may just have enjoyed greater flexibility.

Another element of continuity was the gap between the western and eastern parts of the Iranian plateau. One of the most durable effects of the Seljuq conquest was undeniably the westward diffusion of New Persian. The first major works written in Persian in Isfahan after the conquest were by Khura-sanis (Gurgānī, Nizām al-Mulk,

Amīr Mu‘izzī). But by the twelfth century Persian had become the main language of culture outside of *fiqh*. Anūshirvān b. Khālīd chose to write in Persian, although he had mastered Arabic. And while in the 1070s Māfarrūkhī wrote his anthology dedicated to the son of Nizām al-Mulk in Arabic, one century later Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Razzāq (d. c.1192), his son Kamāl al-Dīn Ismā‘īl and all the other poets of Isfahan wrote their *qasīdas* (most of them dedicated to the Khujandīs or the Sa‘īds) in Persian. Beyond that major cultural trend – a trend in which the role of the Turks was instrumental – the cumbersome nature of the geographical realities prevailed. During the sultanate of Muhammad, Sanjar was practically independent in Khurasan. When Sanjar himself became sultan his nephews were practically independent in western Iran. No military expeditions could change this. The Khwārazmshāhs occupied the place left empty by Sanjar in the east, but despite their efforts they would not succeed in extending effective control over western Iran (ironically, this would happen only after the destruction of the Khwārazmian state by the Mongols and its re-founding by Jalāl al-Dīn Mingburnī in Isfahan and Azerbaijan). On the local political field, the Khujandīs and the Sa‘īds originated from Khurasan, but their network remained western-based (that of the Khujandīs, which is better known, extended to Rayy, Hamadān, Baghdad and Mosul). It would not be until the Safavids that the two core parts of the former Sasanian Empire would be reunited for good (under the name of Iran), although the extent and the meaning of this unity could be discussed even today.<sup>29</sup>

One of the most significant ruptures that could be associated with the rule of the Seljuqs was where it has not been looked for: in their type of rule, or more precisely in the spatial aspect of their rule. At Isfahan the Abbasid governors and the Buyid emirs had been living apart from the population, but they still remained connected to the city. The Abbasid governors settled a few miles

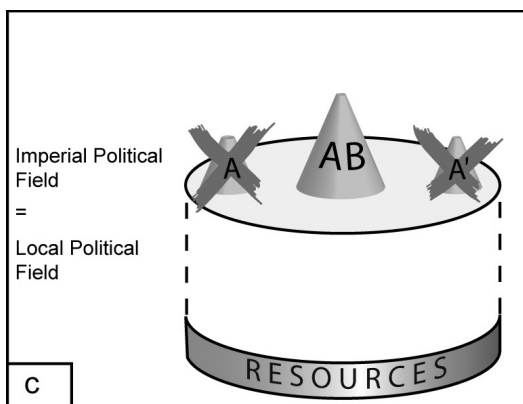


Fig. 4.5c Typology of relations.

from the Sasanian city, near the bazaars of Yahūdiyya and the Friday Mosque built by the Arabs settled in the nearby village of Tihṛān. The Buyids built a citadel (Tabarak) on the outskirts of the burgeoning agglomeration, in a position emblematic of this ‘in-and-out’ attitude. The Seljuqs themselves lived definitely outside of town, in a military camp that moved with the seasons from one pasture to another. This type of rule was new in Islamic Iran. Conversely, it is very much in conformity with what is known of the former Turkic empires: the Türk qaghanate and its successors, the Uyghur/Toquzoghuz and Khitan/Liao qaghanates. This spatial aspect is, I believe, decisive in understanding how this *Zivilisationprozess* of Iranization worked: perhaps not directly – that is, through daily contacts with Iranians in the cities – but mediated by Iranian history as it was celebrated at the court of the Turks, by the new kings of Iran. Iran was then not a territory, a race, nor even a culture, but an historical memory.

## Notes:

1. I would like to thank Kazuo Morimoto for his comments on an earlier version of this draft. Needless to say that all mistakes are my own.
2. I am referring here (to quote only the most significant contributions of Western historiography) to Ann K. Lambton, 'Contributions to the Study of Seljuk Institutions', PhD dissertation (University of London, 1939), and 'The Internal Structure of the Seljuq Empire', in John A. Boyle, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 5: The Seljuq and Mongol Periods* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 203–82; Claudia Klausner, *The Seljuk Vezirate: A Study of Civil Administration 1055–1194* (Cambridge, MA, 1973); Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizârî Ismâ'ilîs against the Islamic World* (La Haye, 1955); Henri Laoust, *La politique de Gazâlî* (Paris, 1970); Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien, aspects spirituels et philosophiques, Volume 2: Sohrawardî et les Platoniciens de Perse* (Paris, 1971); Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006); Gillies Tetley, *The Ghaznavid and Seljuq Turks: Poetry as a Source for Iranian History* (London/New York, 2009). I leave aside the many publications in Russian that, unfortunately, I cannot read. Lambton's synthesis on eleventh-to-fourteenth-century Iran deals extensively with the Iranians. But although it is crammed with data drawn from an impressive array of sources, the result is not fully satisfactory precisely because of the lack of a significant number of case studies that could have helped sharpen the analysis. See Ann K. S. Lambton, *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia: Aspects of Administrative, Economic and Social History, 11th–14th Century* (New York, 1988).
3. It is no coincidence that my PhD supervisor was Jean-Claude Garcin, whose landmark study on the transformation of Mamluk Egypt was also based on the study of a local framework. See Jean-Claude Garcin, *Un centre musulman de la Haute Égypte médiévale: Qūṣ* (Cairo, 1976). In the case of Iran, the utility of the local perspective had already been demonstrated in the groundbreaking works of Jean Aubin and Richard Bulliet. See Jean Aubin, 'Eléments pour l'étude des agglomérations urbaines dans l'Iran médiéval', in Albert Hourani and Samuel Stern, eds, *The Islamic City: Papers on Islamic History I* (Carbondale, 1970), pp. 65–75; 'L'aristocratie urbaine dans l'Iran seljoukide: l'exemple de Sabzawâr', in Pierre Gallais and Yves-Jean Riou, eds, *Mélanges offerts à René Crozet, I* (Poitiers: Société d'études médiévales, 1966), pp. 323–32 (this article can be read as an 'application' of the recommendations provided in the previous title); Richard Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge, MA, 1972); 'The Political-Religious History of Nishapur in the Eleventh Century', in Donald S. Richards, ed., *Islamic Civilization 950–1150* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 71–91; and *Islam, the View from the Edge* (New York, 1994). Paul's groundbreaking book on the society of pre-Mongol Iran focuses on a particular geographical setting (Khurasan and Transoxania). But his epistemological approach is fundamentally different from mine and that of the works quoted above. See Jürgen Paul, *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler: Ostiran und Transoxanien in vormongolischer Zeit* (Stuttgart, 1996).
4. David Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers: A History of Isfahān in the Saljūq Period* (London/New York, 2010). The reader is invited to refer to this text for extended analysis and full bibliographical references. I will refrain from mentioning it further in the notes.

5. Clifford E. Bosworth, 'Barbarian Incursions: The Coming of Turks in the Islamic World', in D. S. Richards, ed., *Islamic Civilization 950–1150*, pp. 1–16. Bosworth continues to use this word in *The History of the Seljuq State: A Translation with Commentary of the Akhbār Al-Dawla Al-Saljūqiyya* (Abingdon/New York, 2011), p. 136 n. 91. Needless to say, the term 'barbarian', which might nowadays sound out-of-place or even offensive to a reader unfamiliar with European history, simply indicates that the kind of relationship between the Turks and the Iranians could be compared to that of the Romans with the Germans in the fourth and fifth centuries AD.
6. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, IV, p. 101 ('Isfahan' by Ann K. Lambton).
7. Ann K. Lambton, 'Aspects of Saljūq Ghuzz Settlement in Persia', in D. S. Richards, ed., *Islamic Civilization 950–1150*, pp. 105–25, esp. p. 111; and Lambton, *Continuity and Change*, pp. 6, 25–6.
8. On the term *ordu*, see Gerhard Doerfer, *Türkische und Mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen* (Wiesbaden, 1963–75), II, pp. 32–9 (entry no. 452).
9. On some of these pastures, see Durand-Guédy, 'Where Did the Saljūqs Live? A Case Study Based on the Reign of Sultan Mas'ūd b. Muḥammad (1134–1152)', *Studia Iranica* 42 (2011), pp. 211–58.
10. According to post-Seljuq documentation, one of the doors in the south-western section of the walls was called the 'Gate of the Kushk' (*Darb-i Kushk*). It might have been in reference to a Seljuq building (long ago destroyed), and therefore it might constitute additional evidence that the Seljuq camp was settled there.
11. On this subject, see Durand-Guédy 'The Tents of the Seljuqs', in David Durand-Guédy, ed., *Turko-Mongol Rulers, Cities and City Life* (Leiden, 2013).
12. For a recent view on the limited spread of New Persian before the Seljuq conquest, see Roy P. Mottahedeh, 'The Idea of Iran in the Buyid Dominions', in Edmund Herzig and Sarah Stewart, eds, *Early Islamic Iran: The Idea of Iran, Volume V* (London, 2012), pp. 153–60.
13. The conclusions reached by Mottahedeh in his classic study on loyalty (with examples drawn from the Buyid period) are valid for the Seljuq period as well. The same kind of key relationship between patron and clients (*istinā' or minnat*) can be discerned from the amazing set of documents contained in the *al-Mukhtārāt min al-rasā'il*, a thirteenth-century compilation of private letters, petitions and official decrees dealing mostly with Isfahan in the second part of the twelfth century. See Roy P. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (New York, 2001 [1980]).
14. See David Durand-Guédy, 'The Political Agenda of an Iranian Adīb at the Time of the Great Seljuqs: Māfarrūkhī's *K. Maḥāsīn Isfahān Put into Context*', *Nouvelle Revue des Etudes Iraniennes* (Tehran) 1 (2008), pp. 67–106.
15. See Omeljan Pritsak, 'Āl-i Burhān', *Der Islam* 30: 1 (1952), pp. 81–96.
16. Jürgen Paul, 'L'invasion mongole comme "révélateur" de la société iranienne', in Denise Aigle, *L'Iran face à la domination mongole* (Tehran, 1997), pp. 37–53.
17. C. E. Bosworth, 'The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000–1217)', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, V, p. 66.
18. See David Durand-Guédy 'Mémoires d'exilés. Lecture de la chronique des Saljūqides de 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī', *Studia Iranica* 35 (2006), pp. 181–202.
19. Mawlawi F. Sanawallah, *The Decline of the Saljūqid Empire* (Calcutta, 1938); Kenneth A. Luther, *The Political Transformation of the Seljuq Sultanate of Iraq and Western Iran: 1152–1187*, unpublished PhD thesis (Princeton University, 1964); Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World'.

20. See S. Heidemann, 'Unislamic Taxes and Unislamic Monetary System in Seljuq Baghdad. Protest of Legal and Religious Scholars in the Period of al-Ghazali', in I. S. Üstün, ed., *İslâm Medeniyetinde Bağdat/Baghdad In The Islamic Civilization* (Istanbul, 2011), pp. 493–506.
21. I have explored this possibility in more detail in Durand-Guédy, 'Shāhdiz vs Alamūt? A Reassessment of the History of the Ismaili Movement in Eleventh-Century Iran', in M. Karimi Zanjani Asl, E. Orthmann and P. G. Schmidl, eds, *The Dustūr al-munajjimīn and Its World* (forthcoming).
22. On this specific point I disagree with Andrew Peacock's analysis of early Seljuq history, in particular with Toghril Beg's alleged alliance with the Hanbalīs. See Andrew C. Peacock, *Early Seljūq History: A New Interpretation* (London/New York, 2010), Chapter 4.
23. I explore this point in more detail in David Durand-Guédy, 'An Emblematic Family of Seljuq Iran: The Khujandīs of Iṣfahān', in C. Lange and S. Mecit, eds, *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp. 182–202.
24. Kamāl al-Dīn Ismā'īl Iṣfahānī, *Dīvān-i Khallāq al-Ma'ānī Abū al-Fazl Kamāl al-Dīn Ismā'īl Iṣfahānī*, ed. Husayn Bahr al-'Ulūmī (Tehran, 1348 / 1970), p. 693.
25. This is expressed in the most extreme terms by Daftary, referring to the Ismaili movement fighting the 'alien rule' of the Turks. Farhad Daftary, 'Hasan-i Sabbāh and the Origins of the Nizārī Isma'īli Movement', in Farhad Daftary, ed., *Medieval Ismai'li History and Thought* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 181–204. See also Daftary's contribution to the present volume.
26. Example from Tabarī quoted by Hugh Kennedy, 'Survival of Iranianness', in Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart, eds, *The Rise of Islam: The Idea of Iran, Volume 4* (London, 2012), pp. 13–29, at p. 17.
27. See Bulliet, *Patricians*, pp. 70–1.
28. Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, *Isfahan im 15 und 16 Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur persischen Stadtgeschichte* (Freiburg, 1980); John R. Perry, 'Toward a Theory of Iranian Urban Moieties: The Ḥaydariyyah and Ni'matiyyah Revisited', *Iranian Studies* 32: 1 (1999), pp. 51–70.
29. The importance of these geographical factors, which tends to be easily forgotten (or even deliberately not taken into account), was highlighted by Bartold (in an article in Russian), and after him, in English, in Vladimir Minorsky, 'Geographical Factors in Persian Art', *BSOAS* 9: 3 (1938), pp. 621–52.

## Baghdad: A View from the Edge on the Seljuq Empire<sup>1</sup>

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From its foundation in 145 (762), Baghdad and the Abbasid caliphate had an ambiguous relationship with Iran and the Persian culture. On the one hand, the new Abbasid capital was located further east than Umayyad Damascus. This demonstrated the interest of the new dynasty in the oriental Islamic provinces, as a political and religious movement that had met strong support in eastern lands, and especially in Khurāsān. On the other hand, a strong and open conflict soon opened between Iraq and the oriental provinces of Iran, culminating during the ‘civil war’ between the two sons of Hārūn al-Rashīd, in the early third (ninth) century, less than half a century after the foundation of Madīnat al-Salām. Moreover, Baghdad had since its foundation occupied a paradoxical position – at the political centre as the capital of a large empire, but located on the cultural border between the Persian and Arabic spheres of influence. During the first Abbasid period, it became an important cultural melting pot, contributing to the incorporation of the administrative and political traditions of ancient Persia into Arab-Islamic culture, a development that had already begun in the Umayyad period.

The Seljuq domination of Iraq, which lasted about a century (from the middle of the fifth [eleventh] to the middle of the sixth [twelfth] centuries), is usually considered to have both reinforced and renewed the Persian heritage in Iraq and in the wider Islamic world. These issues will be considered from a Baghdadi and Abbasid perspective – that is, for the period under consideration, a perspective from the edge on the Seljuq Empire and its Turco-Persian legacy.<sup>2</sup> The power balance between Abbasid caliphs and Seljuq sultans, and between their respective administrations, will be addressed first, emphasizing the Abbasid recovery after decades of Seljuq domination. The social and cultural consequences of the integration of Baghdad within an expansive eastern empire will then be considered from a local perspective.

## *I. Politics in the Seljuq Period: From Seljuq Tutelage to Abbasid Recovery*

The Seljuq period has often been considered a key period in the Islamic Middle Ages. In the eastern lands of the *dār al-islām* it was the end of the 'Iranian intermezzo';<sup>3</sup> in Anatolia, it coincided with the decline of Byzantine Christianity and the rise of the first Turkish population and states. All across the Muslim East, it was seen as an era of 'Sunni revival' following decades of Shi'i domination of a weakened Abbasid dynasty.<sup>4</sup> Yet from a local perspective, it was a time when Baghdad had lost its centrality. Already from Buyid times, Baghdad had been relegated from its role as the political, geographical and symbolic centre of Arabo-Islamic civilization to a peripheral position under foreign rule, despite the nominal authority of the Abbasid caliphs.

Seljuq rule over Iraq has long been considered, in accordance with the view of pro-Seljuq medieval sources, as a 'liberation' of the Abbasid caliphate from the domination of the Shi'i Buyids who had won power a century before the Seljuqs. According to the main Seljuq histories (mainly written in Persian in the sixth [twelfth] century and after), the Turkmen sultans 'delivered' the Abbasid caliph from Buyid tutelage and the Fatimid threat, and firmly re-established his authority over Iraq and the eastern Islamic lands. In this view they were the artisans of what twentieth-century scholarship has called the 'Sunni revival'—a large-scale policy combining the foundation of institutions of higher education (madrasas), the support to Sunni '*ulamā*' and Sufis, and the fight against non-Sunni branches of Islam, in particular the Ismailis of Alamut. Recent scholarship has addressed these questions and discussed the notion of 'Sunni revival'.<sup>5</sup> These studies clearly stated that the Seljuqs established a new tutelage over the Abbasid caliphate, and that the 'Sunni revival' was an important part of the Seljuqs' self-image and propaganda, used by the sultans to assert their political legitimacy. Despite the re-examination of these issues, the history of the Seljuq period remains a highly ideological topic, subject to both ethnic and religious prejudice.

### *1. The Abbasid Caliphate under Seljuq Tutelage*

When the military leader Tughril Beg entered Baghdad in 447 (1055) after having conquered the main Iranian lands, he established a new political and military domination over the reigning caliph al-Qā'im. Tughril Beg did not stay very long in Iraq this time. However, after a period of trouble characterized by a one-year Fatimid rule and the exile of the Abbasid sovereign from his capital, Tughril Beg returned to Baghdad at the end of 449 (beginning of 1058) and restored al-Qā'im to the throne. He was received by the caliph with pomp and circumstance, and officially 'granted' the territories he had already conquered.

The allegiance openly pledged by the sultan to the caliph, and the Seljuqs' need for official Abbasid recognition, did not imply the political subjection of the Turkmen ruler. The caliph–sultan power balance was formalized by a written contract (*'ahd*) delivered by the Abbasid chancery to the sultan and bestowed on him during the ceremony of investiture. Such *'ahds* are mentioned until the reign of Sultan Mas'ūd (d. 547 [1152]). These documents might give the impression that the sultan was a mere employee of the Abbasid caliph. But in fact, although their contents are not known, the sources indicate that they were only occasionally used by the sultans to remind the caliphs of their liabilities. In particular, just as in Buyid times, caliphs were not allowed to lead their own army.

This prohibition was a key issue of the Seljuq tutelage, since it prevented the Abbasid caliphs from pursuing a regional policy on their own, or even from becoming a military threat to the Seljuq sultans. Moreover, it implied that the caliph was dependent on Seljuq military power when needed, which would authorize the sultans to ask for enormous sums of money in return for their 'protection'. These claims enabled the Seljuqs to grab a huge share of the financial revenues of Iraq, consisting mainly of urban and rural taxes. If necessary, the caliphs also imposed non-canonical taxes (*mukūs*), or exacted exceptional taxation from the wealthy Baghdadi elite.

As a result, the Seljuqs secured a significant share of Iraqi revenues. They also closely controlled the Abbasid administration, which had been reduced to a mere caliphal chancery (*inshā'*) when Tughril Beg first entered Baghdad. At that time the Caliph al-Qā'im was assisted by a vizier, Ra'īs al-ru'asā' Ibn al-Muslima, who was killed during the Fatimid *fitna* of 450 (1058). After three years without a vizier, in 453 (1061), the caliph appointed a new vizier, and from that date the function was almost continuously occupied until the end of the period. But under the rule of the Great Seljuqs, besides the caliph's personal service (*khidma*), the Abbasid vizier's main tasks were related to diplomacy and protocol. As the head of the Abbasid administration, he was the principal representative of the caliph to the sultan and his high dignitaries. But his power was as limited as the caliph's, and during the second half of the fifth (eleventh) century, he frequently received direct orders from the sultans,<sup>6</sup> and was on some occasions dismissed on Seljuq orders.<sup>7</sup>

Until the end of the fifth (eleventh) century, the main Abbasid officials were the *hujjāb* (pl. of *hājib*), who took care of local administration under the orders of the vizier and played an important role in urban control in Baghdad. But during the reign of the Great Seljuqs, the authority of the sultans over the caliphs was also embodied by the presence in Baghdad of Seljuq officials sharing the control of the city with Abbasid functionaries and with some factions of the local population.

In Baghdad, just as in other cities of the Seljuq Empire, the sultan was represented by a military official called *shihna*, in addition to his vizier. The



*shihnas* were chosen from among the emirs or *khādims* (personal servants) of the sultans, and were usually Turks.<sup>8</sup> They were military commanders, and held varied responsibilities including, in Baghdad, urban control and political and diplomatic representation of the sultan at the caliph's court. On some occasions the *shihna* could also levy taxes in the name of the sultan.<sup>9</sup>

The Seljuq *shihna* of Baghdad played a role in urban policy, but also defended the political, military and religious interests of the sultans in the Abbasid capital. He would, for example, intervene in Sunni–Shi'i or internal Sunni riots. During the reign of Malikshāh (465–85 [1072–92]), he also had to protect Ash'ari preachers sent by the sultan's vizier Nizām al-Mulk from the local Hanbali population.<sup>10</sup> Some *shihnas* were feared by the Baghdadis for their fierce repressive actions,<sup>11</sup> whereas others, fewer in number, led an active local policy including the development of urban infrastructure.<sup>12</sup>

The Seljuq *shihna* shared responsibility for urban control with Abbasid officials like the above-mentioned *hujjāb*, who were in charge of specific districts of the city; the *sāhib al-shurta*, or head of the police; and the civil officer in charge for the *hisba*, the *muhtasib*.<sup>13</sup> Militias of Baghdadi civilians also played a role in maintaining public order, under the leadership of a local notable, the *naqīb* of the Hashimites. Their precise role is not known, but the chronicles depict them as groups of armed people commanded by the *naqīb*, intervening in local events sometimes upon caliphal request,<sup>14</sup> sometimes on their own initiative. They seem to have been particularly active on the west bank of the city, where direct Abbasid and Seljuq control might have been less well established than on the east bank.<sup>15</sup>

During the domination of the Great Seljuqs, the sultan's *shihna* had a de facto supremacy over the other agents of urban control. Abbasid officials and troops were sometimes asked to assist the Seljuq forces in case of important riots, and actual cooperation could be observed in cases of Sunni–Shi'i clashes. But most of the time, the assignment of the Seljuq *shihna* was to support the sultans' decisions in the political, religious and economic fields, with or without caliphal and local approval. The Abbasid administration was not able to re-establish full control over the city before the middle of the sixth (twelfth) century.

## 2. Matrimonial Alliances as a Reflection of the Abbasid–Seljuq Power Balance

The power balance between the Abbasid caliphs and Seljuq sultans underwent a marked change during the first decades of the sixth (twelfth) century. The caliphs gradually recovered their power in diverse ways, such as becoming military leaders, developing their administrative services, gaining control of their capital, and recovering the income from taxes and land revenues. This shift is also visible in the matrimonial alliances between the Abbasid and Seljuq families from the reign of Tughril Beg onwards.

George Makdisi has stressed the role of matrimonial alliances in the establishment of a strong relationship between the Abbasids and the first Seljuq rulers.<sup>16</sup> The Caliph al-Qā'im had been given Arslān Khātūn, the niece of Tughril Beg, as a spouse a few months after the first entry of the sultan in Baghdad, in Muharram 448 (March–April 1056).<sup>17</sup> But al-Qā'im was rather reluctant to give his own daughter in marriage to Tughril Beg, since if a son was born from that alliance, it would have given the Seljuqs an opportunity to claim the Abbasid throne. Eventually the Seljuq pressure on al-Qā'im became very heavy, going so far as the confiscation of the caliph's *iqṭā's*. He was finally forced to agree to this wedding in 454 (1060), but Arabic sources underline that it was with great reluctance.<sup>18</sup> Tughril Beg died shortly after the wedding, which remained childless.

After these events, Abbasid caliphs continued to marry Seljuq princesses. At the request of Alp Arslān, al-Qā'im had his son and designated successor (*walī al-'ahd*), the future Caliph al-Muqtadī, marry Khātūn al-Safariyya, daughter of the sultan, in 464 (1072).<sup>19</sup> When he was appointed caliph, al-Muqtadī also married the daughter of Malikshāh after having received the sultan in Baghdad, in 480 (1087).<sup>20</sup> Another daughter of Malikshāh became the wife of the Caliph al-Mustazhir in 502 (1108), but did not settle in Baghdad before 504 (1111).<sup>21</sup> In 518 (1124), his successor al-Mustarshid married a daughter of Sultan Sanjar, and built a new palace in Baghdad for her.<sup>22</sup> The last Abbasid caliph to wed a Seljuq princess was al-Muqtafi (r. 530–55 [1136–60]), who married the sister of Sultan Mas'ūd in 531 (1137),<sup>23</sup> a few months after Mas'ūd had made him a caliph instead of his nephew al-Rāshid. The political influence of Mas'ūd was so great that he succeeded in marrying the caliph's daughter a few years later.<sup>24</sup> Such weddings were undertaken in two steps: the contract was first signed in the eastern Seljuq lands by emissaries of the caliph; then, a few months or even years after this initial ceremony, the spouse was sent to Baghdad.

These marriages were of varying character, reflecting the shifting power balance between the caliphs and the sultan. The first weddings showed the Abbasid caliph's wish to ensure the support of the Great Seljuq sultans by creating close links with them; this was a common practice in the Seljuq family itself. These matrimonial unions were a significant investment for the caliphs, since they had to pay important dowries to the Seljuq princesses they married.<sup>25</sup> In consequence, matrimonial alliances were also an additional way for the sultans to seize a part of Iraqi revenues. They can be seen as a strategy of weak caliphs seeking Seljuq protection. The marriage of al-Mustarshid to the daughter of Sanjar a few decades later (518 [1124]) displays, by contrast, the decision of a powerful Abbasid caliph to favour one Seljuq sultan over his rivals. This was no coincidence, since the start of the 'Abbasid recovery' can be dated to the reign of al-Mustarshid (512–29 [1118–35]).

### 3. *The Abbasid Recovery of the Sixth (Twelfth) Century*

As we have seen, Seljuq tutelage over the caliphate included a firm grip on Abbasid administration and policy, the control of a large part of Iraqi urban and rural revenues, and an important role in maintaining order in Baghdad in pursuit of Seljuq interests. Prevented from leading his own army, the caliph was unable to develop an independent regional policy.

This interdiction was observed for some decades, and, except for a reduced guard devoted to the caliph, no Abbasid army is mentioned by the sources until the reign of al-Mustashid. For the first time since the beginning of Buyid rule (mid fourth [tenth] century), this caliph enlisted an army to fight the Mazyadid Amir Dubays, Lord of al-Hilla, in 516 (1123).<sup>26</sup> From that time onwards, an Abbasid army led by the caliph or his representative (usually his vizier) is periodically mentioned through the sixth (twelfth) century. But Abbasid caliphs were able to maintain a regional policy of their own, and in some cases even to fight the Seljuq presence in Iraq. The last Seljuq troops looting Iraq were defeated by Caliph al-Mustadī' in 572 (1176).<sup>27</sup>

The reappearance of an Abbasid army was the most tangible mark of the Abbasid recovery of power and authority. It was concurrent with the revival of Abbasid administrative services (*dīwāns*), clearly observable in Arabic sources – both chronicles and bibliographical dictionaries. The number of identified officials (*ashāb al-dīwān* or *arbāb al-manāsib*) grew throughout the period, and an increasing number of references are made to nominations and dismissals of Abbasid officials on the caliph's orders, in particular from the reign of Caliph al-Mustazhir (r. 487–512 [1094–1118]), the father of al-Mustashid. Al-Mustazhir had recovered enough power to suspend, albeit only for one year, the Seljuq *khutba* in Baghdad in 496 (1102).<sup>28</sup> From his reign onwards, Abbasid administrative services began to be more developed and more organized. Departments rarely mentioned in Buyid times reappeared, such as the caliphal treasury (*makhzan*) and the inspection service (*dīwān al-zimām*).<sup>29</sup> So did inspectors (*nāzir*, pl. *nuzarā'*) of the various services. The most important function, besides that of vizier, became that of *ustādh al-dār*;<sup>30</sup> both dignitaries had a very high social status. The positions of *sāhib al-makhzan* and *sāhib dīwān al-zimām* were also of great importance, and could lead to the vizierate.

From the second third of the sixth (twelfth) century onwards, after the tragic episode of the dismissal of the Caliph al-Rāshid (529–30 [1135–6]) by Sultan Mas'ūd, Abbasid caliphs gained more power in the administrative, fiscal and military fields, and were able to recover partial control over Iraq. At the same time, direct and indirect Seljuq control over Baghdad was waning: the Seljuq *shihna* left Baghdad in 547 (1148), and the last Seljuq *khutba* was made in the Abbasid capital in 556 (1161).<sup>31</sup> The end of Seljuq control over Iraq and the caliphate dated ultimately from more than three decades before Caliph al-Nāsir

(575–622 [1180–1225]) had put an end to the eastern Seljuq dynasty by killing Sultan Tughril III, in 590 (1194).

## *II. The Seljuq Legacy Reconsidered from a Baghdadi Perspective*

Seljuq domination over Iraq and the Abbasid caliphate lasted for about one century, the tutelage of the first 50 years progressively fading, to be replaced by a restoration of Abbasid authority. This authority did not extend to the totality of Iraqi lands, since local powers (Mazyadids of al-Hilla, 'Uqaylids of Mawsil, Bedouin tribes of the steppe) limited the extent of caliphal control over former Abbasid lands. Although it was limited in duration and partly theoretical, Seljuq domination over Iraq brought political, cultural and social changes to the central lands of the caliphate and to its capital, strengthened the links between Iraq and the Iranian east, and favoured a movement of eastern elites towards the west – in the intellectual and religious fields, as well as the administrative one.

### *1. Seljuq Urban Policy in Baghdad*

All through the period of Seljuq domination, and especially after the death of Sultan Malikshāh, when various male members of the Seljuq family started to compete for the title of sultan, Abbasid recognition was a crucial stake for the sultans, and sometimes led them to put direct pressure on the caliph and his capital.<sup>32</sup> Except in these particular circumstances, however, Baghdad and Iraq were never crucial in Seljuq policy. The first sultans pursued intensive building activity in Baghdad, erecting several mosques and palaces (Figure 5.1), but they barely used them as residences, except when political instability required their presence in the Abbasid capital. They had a clear preference for the Iranian cities, which were located closer to the central provinces of their empire – above all Isfahan, whose climate was milder.

During his first stay in Baghdad, in 448 (1056), the first Great Seljuq sultan, Tughril Beg, ordered a whole city to be built on the east bank in Baghdad.<sup>33</sup> This urban settlement was called 'the City of Tughril' (*Madīnat Tughril*). It was surrounded by walls, and included independent markets and a Friday mosque (*jāmi'*).<sup>34</sup> It was built from materials taken from demolished building sites on the west bank of Baghdad. Tughril Beg also founded a palace that Baghdadis knew as *Dār al-Mamlaka*. This new area devoted to Seljuq power was located in the neighbourhood of the Abbasid court and palaces (*Dār al-Khilāfa*), without being too close. In addition, the east bank of Baghdad was easier to reach coming from the oriental Seljuq lands. To get to the west bank, the Seljuq armies would have had to cross the Tigris, which was sometimes difficult, or even impossible, when the river was in flood. Another reason for the choice of this location may have been that the main Shi'i-populated areas were situated on the other bank. In fact, Tughril Beg also ordered the construction of new markets, khans and dwellings in the Shi'i area of al-Karkh, possibly to confine

its Shi'i population inside this district by providing sufficient resources for its autonomy.<sup>35</sup> Clashes indeed frequently occurred between Shi'i inhabitants of al-Karkh and Sunni residents of neighbouring areas.<sup>36</sup>

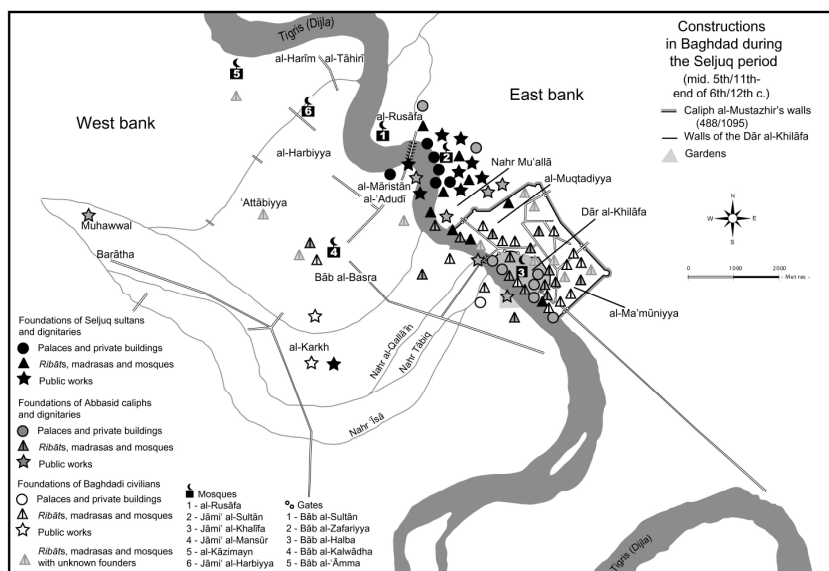


Fig. 5.1 *Constructions in Baghdad during the Seljuq period. Map by V. Van Renterghem (after Le Strange, Baghdad). Due to the lack of archaeological remains, almost all localizations are hypothetical.*

Sultan Alp Arslān never visited Baghdad, but his successor, Malikshāh, pursued Tughril's urban strategy by patronizing construction activity in the same district. In 485 (1092) he built a new Friday mosque, the Jāmi' al-Sultān, surrounded by sumptuous residences built by major civil and military dignitaries such as the vizier, Nizām al-Mulk, his rival Tāj al-Mulk, the financial officer (*mustawfi*), and the main emirs.<sup>37</sup> Tāj al-Mulk and other high-ranking Seljuq officials also financed the construction of public buildings in the neighbourhood of the Dār al-Mamlaka, including some of the first Baghdadī madrasas.<sup>38</sup> After a few years, this part of Baghdad had become a prosperous aristocratic area, mainly inhabited by Seljuq officials. It hosted other official Seljuq institutions like a mint (Dār al-darb), but also residential areas and commercial infrastructures (khans and markets – named Sūq al-madīna, or 'Town market').<sup>39</sup>

After the reign of the Great Seljuqs, some Seljuq constructions were still erected in Baghdad. Muhammad ibn Malikshāh (498–511 [1105–18]) ordered his *shihna*, Bahrūz, to complete the building of the Seljuq Friday Mosque (Jāmi' al-sultān), the construction of which had started during Malikshāh's

reign, and to erect a new Dār al-Mamlaka, also called al-Dār al-sultāniyya.<sup>40</sup> Following its destruction by fire in 515 (1121), his son Mahmūd erected a new palace near the Tigris.<sup>41</sup> The last public edifice built by a Seljuq sultan was a new mint, erected by Sultan Mas'ūd in 541 (1146) – but this was less part of an urban policy than an attempt to recover financial control over Abbasid lands.<sup>42</sup> But by the reign of al-Mustazhir, the Abbasid caliph had already recovered enough local power to order the destruction of a large part of the city of Tughril – especially the markets, which had been renovated by Sultan Malikshāh at great expense.<sup>43</sup> Fires and flood, common in Baghdad, also contributed to the ruin of many Seljuq public and private buildings. Nevertheless, by their public and private building as well as by the founding of madrasas and Sufi institutions (*ribāts*), the sultans and their dignitaries left a distinctive mark on the cityscape – a mark that was to last longer than Seljuq control over the city.

## 2. *Seljuq Sponsorship, Madrasas and Social Change among Baghdadi Fuqahā'*

Seljuq sponsorship of new kinds of establishments also brought social changes. Their distinctive patronage of Hanafi, Shafi'i and Sufi institutions initiated the arrival of religious and political elites from the eastern part of the Seljuq Empire into Baghdad. Some of these newcomers succeeded in settling on a long-term basis in Baghdad, and gave birth to some of the city's most powerful families in the sixth (twelfth) century.

The first obvious consequence of the restoration of Sunni power was the reduction of public space allowed to Shi'i elites. Shi'i populations remained important in Baghdad, but the Sunni sources – the only local sources available for this period – allowed no space to Shi'i thinkers or religious authorities. Some of the Shi'i scholars of Baghdad suffered persecutions at the very beginning of Seljuq rule, and left the Abbasid capital.<sup>44</sup> Thereafter, other Shi'i scholars of less importance are mentioned in Baghdad under Seljuq rule, but none was comparable to the most important Shi'i figures of late Buyid times, like the shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413 [1022]), and the Talibid brothers al-Radī (d. 400 [1009]) and al-Murtadā (d. 436 [1044]), who were among the most eminent Baghdadi thinkers and hadith-transmitters of the time.

The impact of Seljuq domination over Sunni religious and judicial elites was much more variable, and must be evaluated *madhhab* by *madhhab*. The most striking changes concerned the transmitters of Muslim law (*fiqh*). The most significant change was the foundation in Baghdad of many madrasas – new institutions coming from eastern Iran providing stipends and permanent positions to *fiqh*-teachers (*mudarrisūn*); previously the teaching of *fiqh*, as of other subjects, had never generated any institutional recompense. This led to a deep transformation of the career opportunities offered to Baghdadi *fuqahā'*. But since the various *madhāhib* had unequal networks of madrasas, they underwent contrasting changes.

Starting with the above-mentioned Seljuq foundation of two Hanafi and two Shafi'i institutions of learning,<sup>45</sup> around 30 madrasas were built in Baghdad from the beginning of Seljuq rule until the end of the sixth (twelfth) century. They were mainly located on the east bank of the city. Among them, 11 were devoted to Shafi'i law, nine to Hanbali and seven to Hanafi. But if the Hanafi and Shafi'i *fuqahā'* benefited from an early and strong network of madrasas, dating back to the first years of Seljuq presence in Baghdad, the first Hanbali madrasa was founded nearly half a century later.<sup>46</sup> At the end of the sixth (twelfth) century a good number of madrasas were dedicated to Hanbali *fiqh*, but most had been built in the last decades of the century. As a result, Hanbali *fiqh* continued to be taught outside the madrasas, in oratories (*masjids*) or in private circles, for longer than Shafi'i or Hanafi law were taught. The Hanbali milieu was consequently less affected by the appearance of this institution than the other Baghdadi *madhāhib*. Important local families like the Banū al-Farrā' continued to play a crucial role in the transmission of Hanbali *fiqh*.<sup>47</sup> The second law school in Baghdad after the Shafi'i, the Hanbali *madhhab*, retained a pronounced local character, whereas Baghdadi *fuqahā'* of the two other *madhāhib* suffered strong competition from foreign jurists eager to teach in the prestigious madrasas of the Abbasid capital.

The most favourable position was held by the Hanafi *fuqahā'*. Fewer than the Shafi'i and Hanbali, they enjoyed the official support of the Seljuq sultans. A solid network of Hanafi institutions had been founded in Baghdad by the first third of the sixth (twelfth) century,<sup>48</sup> and their lucrative teaching positions were mainly held by local jurists (Figure 5.2).<sup>49</sup> Two families managed to retain the most prestigious madrasa positions: the Hashemite Baghdadi Zaynabī<sup>50</sup> and the Lamghānī, a family from Khurāsān.<sup>51</sup> The Hanafi madrasas of Baghdad proved attractive to foreign *fuqahā'*, but the position of local Hanafis was not threatened by their arrival.

The situation was different for Baghdadi Shafi'i. Shafi'i madrasas were numerous and ancient, first sponsored by the Seljuqs and then by Abbasid dignitaries<sup>52</sup> – but no institution could compete with the first Shafi'i madrasa of Iraq, the Nizāmiyya. This madrasa was of such outstanding prestige that it attracted high-level Shafi'i jurists to Baghdad, all eager to teach in what was at the time the most important teaching institution in the central Islamic lands. Many of those jurists came from Iranian lands under Seljuq rule. Consequently, the rate of immigration of *fuqahā'* and madrasa teachers was higher among the Shafi'i than among the other Baghdadi *madhāhib*, resulting in heavy competition from outsiders for local Shafi'i teaching positions.<sup>53</sup> It was thus more difficult for local families to monopolize the main Shafi'i madrasa positions, despite the support provided by powerful Seljuq and Abbasid officials to their *madhhab*.

The foundation of madrasas had a different impact on each local *madhhab*, and the Sunni policy ascribed to the Seljuq sultans must therefore be considered in this light, and within the dynamics of *madhhab* competition.

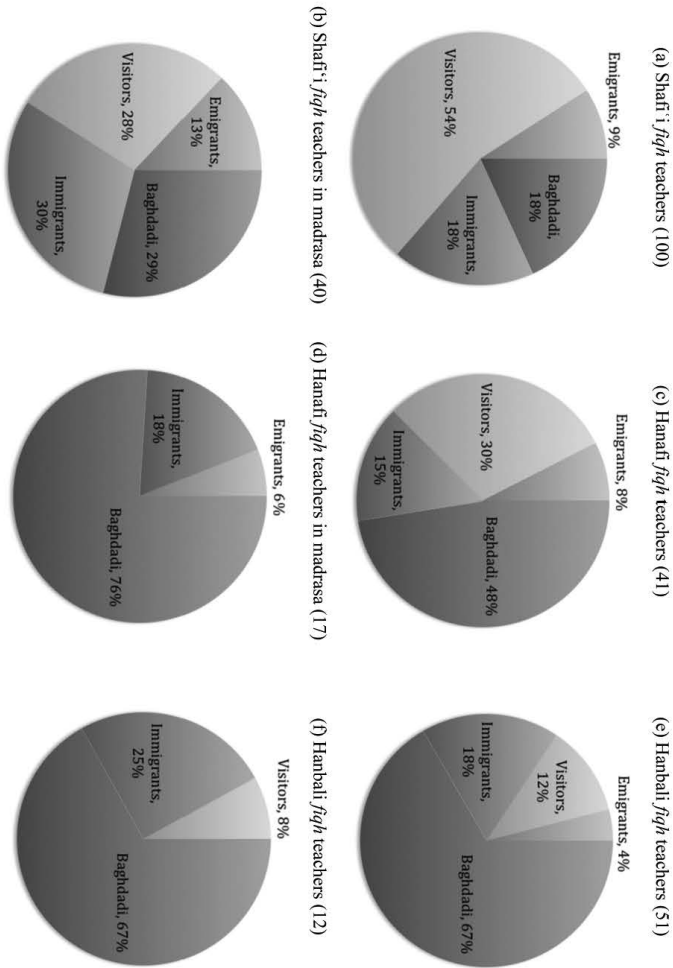


Fig. 5.2 Local and foreign *fiqh* teachers in Baghdad during the Seljuq period, according to the madhhab.

Note : these graphs were built using a prosopographical database containing information about more than 2,600 persons who lived in Baghdad or visited the city and who died between 447/1055 and 600/1203. 192 of them taught *fiqh* in Baghdad, in different places including madrasas for 69 of them. These graphs show the proportion of local *fiqh* teachers inside the three dominant Baghdad *madhabs*, in all kinds of places and institutions (including madrasas) for graphs (a), (c) and (e), and exclusively in madrasas for the graphs (b), (d) and (f).



### 3. *Successful Eastern Families in Baghdad*

Seljuq domination also brought deep changes in the Sufi milieu, favouring the settlement in Baghdad of Sufi families of eastern origin. Several Sufi institutions were founded in the Abbasid capital during the Seljuq period. Around 30 establishments devoted to mystics (*ribāt*, *khānqāh*) are mentioned during the period. Some of them dated as far back as Buyid times, but most were founded during the sixth (twelfth) century.<sup>54</sup> They were used as residences by Sufis and travellers, and sometimes also by disgraced politicians, and it became fashionable for Sufis and officials to be buried in *ribāts*. These institutions hosted such mystical events as *dhikr* and *samāʿ*, but also other activities like circles of popular preaching (*waʿz*) or hadith transmission, and were deeply integrated into urban life.

Each *ribāt* was directed by a shaykh. Although it is not clear how such a shaykh was appointed or exactly what role he played, we know that the position was prestigious and that the shaykhs of *ribāts* belonged among the notables of Baghdad. During the sixth (twelfth) century, four Sufi families were of particular importance. All of them were of oriental origin, and they directed the prominent Baghdadi *ribāts*.<sup>55</sup> The first to settle in Baghdad in Seljuq times were the Zawzanī family, originally from Khurāsān, but they disappeared after three generations. The *ribāt* known under their name was from then on directed by members of the Nīsābūrī family, who already held the position of shaykh of the Abū Saʿd's *ribāt*. The Nīsābūrīs were also the first Baghdadi Sufis to be granted the title of *shaykh al-shuyūkh* ('Shaykh of the Shakykhs'), possibly due to their strong political connections.<sup>56</sup> The Mayhanī family, also hailing from Khurāsān, directed the Bistāmī *ribāt* during the sixth (twelfth) century. Another successful oriental lineage of mystics in Baghdad was that of the Suhrawardīs, a family that came from the Iranian province of Jibāl. Three generations of Suhrawardīs are known in the sixth (twelfth) century, linked to popular preaching (*waʿz*) and *fiqh*, as well as to Sufism. The first member of the family to settle in Baghdad was Abū Hafs ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 532 [1137]), who became shaykh of the *ribāt* of Saʿāda.<sup>57</sup> His nephew, Abū al-Najīb (d. 563 [1168]),<sup>58</sup> came to Baghdad to study at the Nizāmiyya madrasa. He first acted as a successful *wāʿiz* with the support of Seljuq officials, and subsequently owed his appointment as the *fiqh*-teacher (*mudarris*) of the same madrasa to Sultan Masʿūd. Falling into disgrace with the decline of Seljuq power in Iraq, he ended up as the shaykh of a *ribāt* that was given his name. His own nephew, Abū Muhammad ʿUmar, had an impressive Sufi career in Baghdad, and ended up as the shaykh of four Baghdadi *ribāts*.<sup>59</sup>

These four families had a certain number of things in common: their Iranian origin; their close link to Seljuq power; an involvement in *fiqh* and *waʿz*, as well as in mysticism; three of them even succeeded in keeping important positions in Baghdad after the decline of their Seljuq sponsors. Their stories also illustrate the growing connection between Sufism and political power, as

well as the social eminence acquired by some of the mystical leaders, particularly the shaykhs of the most important Baghdadi *ribāts*.

The judicial milieu also witnessed the emergence of newcomers from the eastern parts of the Seljuq Empire. The sultans favoured the Hanafī *madhhab*, and under their rule Abbasid caliphs nominated Hanafī chief judges (*qādī al-quḍāt*) in Iraq.<sup>60</sup> In Baghdad, this preference provided new career opportunities for Hanafī families of both local and foreign origin. At the very beginning of Seljuq rule, ‘Amīd al-Mulk al-Kundurī – Tughril Beg’s vizier, of strong Hanafī inclination – ‘recommended’ Caliph al-Qā’im to appoint the Iranian Hanafī Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Dāmaghānī to the position of *qādī al-quḍāt*, which he kept until his death in 478 (1085).<sup>61</sup> Even though his arrival in Baghdad from his native province of Qūmis (south of Tabaristān) dated back to Buyid times, his successful career is clearly related to Seljuq sponsorship of Ḥanafism. Al-Dāmaghānī, who had come to Baghdad a poor young man, soon became a wealthy, influential chief qadi. After his death he was succeeded by his eldest son, Abū al-Hasan ‘Alī, who had already been made qadi by his father. Once appointed chief qadi, Abū al-Hasan nominated his brother Abū Ja‘far ‘Abd Allāh as judge of one of the districts of Baghdad. Both brothers, like their father, also held important positions in the Abbasid administration; Abū ‘Abd Allāh and Abū al-Hasan stood in for the vizier on different occasions. Three sons and four grandsons of Abū al-Hasan later became qadi.

In total, 19 members of this family, representing five generations, are known for the period (Figure 5.3). Although some were only modest hadith-transmitters or *fiqh*-teachers, many were influential judges, and nepotism and marital alliances with other prestigious judicial families were common practices for them. Their success was sustained long after the period of Seljuq domination. For instance, two descendants of the Dāmaghānī family were *qādī al-quḍāt* at the beginning of the reign of Caliph al-Nāsir (575–622 [1180–1225]). Four members of the family acted as *qādī al-quḍāt* between 447 (1056) and the end of the sixth (twelfth) century, monopolizing this position for more than 80 years.

The coming of the Dāmaghānī to Baghdad cannot be attributed to Seljuq patronage, since Abū ‘Abd Allāh settled in Baghdad during the Buyid period. In this case, it is also difficult to judge whether the fact that he came from Iran was essential in securing Seljuq support. But on a larger scale, the period witnessed an intensive circulation of Sunni elites between Iran and the main cities of Iraq.<sup>62</sup> Quantitative study of the geographical mobility of scholars, Sufis, emirs and political dignitaries living in Baghdad, or who visited the city during the period, indicates a strong link between Iraq and various regions of Iran. Visitors came from all Iranian areas. The greatest number originated from the eastern provinces (Khurāsān, Khwārazm and Transoxiana), and an equal number came from the central provinces (Fārs, Kirmān) and western ones (Tabaristān, Jibāl, Khūzistān).<sup>63</sup> Many of these people came to Baghdad to

study, and some settled permanently in the Abbasid capital, as we have seen. Some were directly linked to Seljuq power (in particular, to political and military elites working for the sultans), but most of them were just individuals taking advantage of the new possibilities offered by Seljuq patronage to settle in Baghdad. Consequently, the elites of Baghdad experienced profound change in many fields.

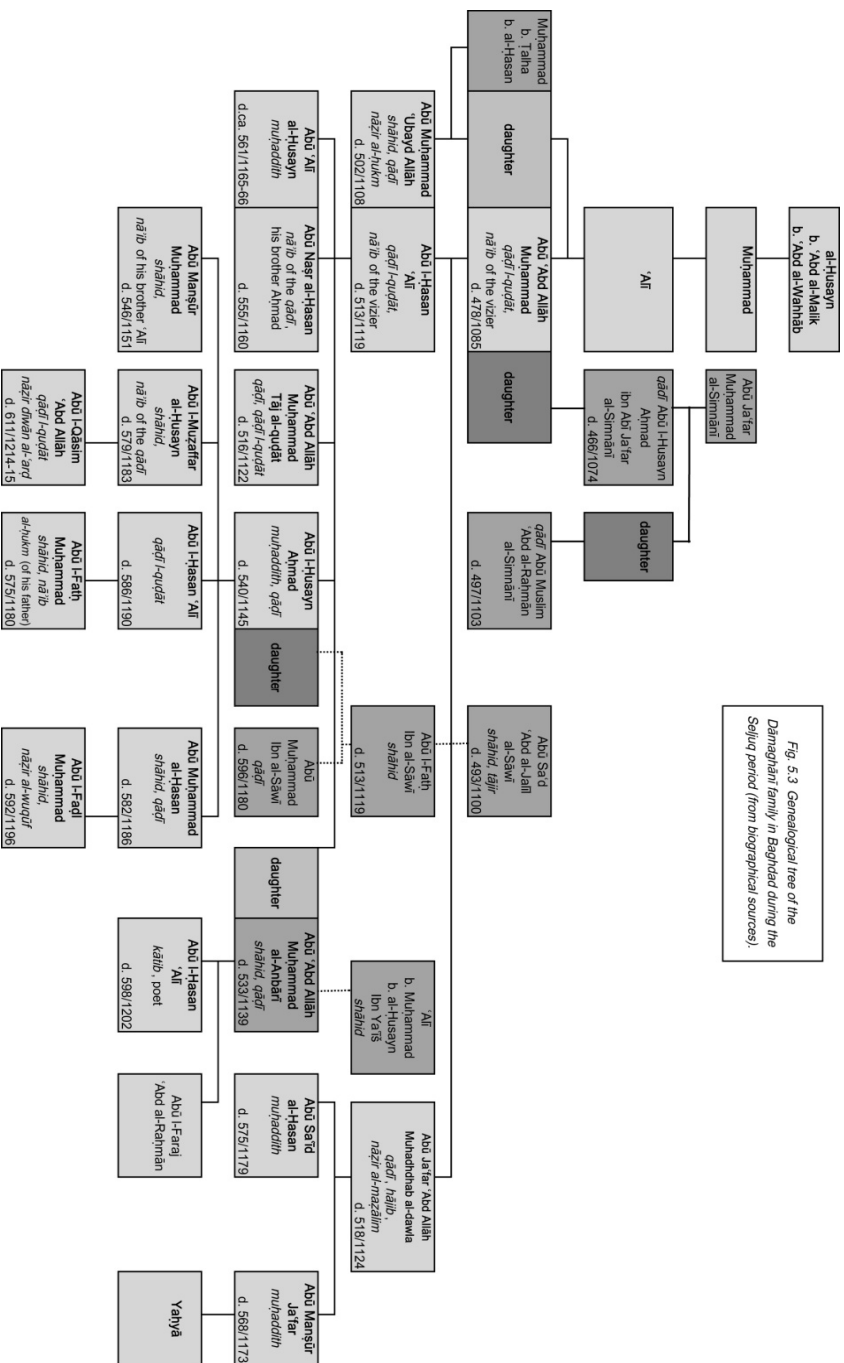
The links with Iran persisted during the first half of the sixth (twelfth) century, but not all Iranian elites who came to Baghdad intended to settle in the Abbasid capital at that time. Many were only short-term visitors, who returned to their native towns after their studies were completed.

Relations between Baghdad and the eastern provinces progressively diminished during the second half of this century, as the connection became stronger between Iraq and the central Islamic lands – in particular with the Jazīra and Bilād al-Shām – at the ascension of the Zangid then Ayyubid dynasties.<sup>64</sup> A new political and cultural era was beginning, when Iraq would again turn towards its western Arab neighbours. But this era did not last for very long, since the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 656 (1258) again incorporated Iraq and its capital into a Persian-speaking, eastern ensemble.

### *Conclusion: Questioning Seljuq Cultural Impact in Baghdad*

The period of Seljuq domination in Baghdad was one of great social and institutional change, and of intensive contacts with the Iranian east. It must nevertheless be kept in mind that not all changes in the period can be ascribed to the Seljuqs or to a deliberate Sunni policy, since many also came from indigenous trends dating back to the Buyid period. In addition, the institutions (both *ribāts* and madrasas) founded first by Seljuq officials, and then by Abbasid dignitaries and Baghdadi civilians, had a varying impact on the different factions of the local Sunni population.

Due to the complexity of these developments, the dissemination of Persian culture in Iraq during the Seljuq period is difficult to measure, and cannot be ascribed to Seljuq activities alone. One of the main consequences of Seljuq domination over Iraq may have been the inclusion of Iraq into an eastern, 'Persianized' empire, favouring the immigration of scholars and officials of Iranian origin. The social change inaugurated by this movement can be considered a part of the Seljuq heritage in Baghdad, and had social and cultural consequences long after the collapse of the Turkmen sultans in Iraq and in the Iranian lands.



## Notes:

1. I would like to thank Marianne Boqvist for the linguistic improvements she brought to this paper.
2. The title of this article is obviously a tribute to Richard Bulliet's seminal book, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (New York, 1994).
3. According to an expression in Vladimir Minorsky, 'La domination des Daïlamites', *Société des Études Iraniennes* 3 (1932), p. 21.
4. I recently discussed the question of the so-called 'Sunni revival' in Vanessa Van Renterghem, 'Controlling and Developing Baghdad: Caliphs, Sultans and the Balance of Power in the Abbasid Capital (mid-5th/11th to late 6th/12th centuries)', in Christian Lange and Songül Mecit, eds, *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp. 117–38.
5. Varied points of view have been expressed on the subject. See Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam* (North Carolina, 2006); the recent collective work *The Seljuqs*, edited by Christian Lange and Songül Mecit; and, before them, George Makdisi in various works since the 1960s.
6. In 491 (1098), for example, Sultan Barkiyāruq ordered his emirs and the caliph's vizier Ibn Jāhīr to prepare militarily against the Frankish threat (Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam fī ta'rīkh al-umam wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Muhammad and Mustafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Atā [Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1412 (1992)], XVIII, p. 43; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, ed. Ahmad 'Abd al-Wahhāb Fatīh [Cairo: Dār al-hadīth, 1414 (1994)], XII, p. 167).
7. This happened, for example, in 471 (1078) (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, p. 198; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-ta'rīkh*, ed. Muhammad Yūsuf al-Daqqāq [Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1418 (1998)], VIII, p. 417; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān fī ta'rīkh al-a'yān*, ed. Ali Sevīm, 'Mir'ātü'z-Zaman Fī Tarihi'l-āyan [Kayip Uyūnüt-Tevvārīh'ten Naklen Selçuklularla İlgili Bölümler] Sibṭ Ibnü'l Cevzī', *Belgeler* 14: 18 [1989–92], p. 213).
8. Of the 21 known *shihnas* of Seljuq Baghdad, 14 were emirs.
9. See for example the events of 453 (1061), when the first Seljuq *shihna* to be mentioned in Baghdad, in a context of tension between the Seljuq ruler and the caliph, was ordered by Sultan Tughril Beg to collect taxes from the local population (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, p. 69).
10. The chronicles report different cases of Seljuq *shihnas* military protecting Ash'ari preachers (*wu'āz*) sent to Hanbali neighbourhoods of Baghdad by Nizām al-Mulk, causing riots (*fitnas*). This happened, for example, in 469 (1076) (Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt*, ed. *Belgeler*, p. 205) and in 475 (1082) (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, p. 224).
11. A figure of powerful and merciless *shihna* was Sa'd al-Dawla Kawharā'in (d. 493 [1099]), who had served the last Buyids before the Seljuqs and represented in Baghdad Alp Arslān and then Malik Shāh (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVII, p. 56 [#3694]; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, IX, 26; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt*, ed. Mekka, I, p. 340).
12. Of the Seljuq *shihna*, the most appreciated by the Baghdadis was Bahrūz al-Ghiyāthī, surnamed Mujāhid al-Dīn (d. 540 [1145]), whose name was attached to a Sufi institution (*ribāt*) he founded on the west bank of Baghdad (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVIII, p. 46 [#4116]; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, IX, p. 336; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān fī ta'rīkh al-a'yān* [Hyderabad, 1955], p. 186).

13. In addition to the inspection of markets and of commercial transactions, the duties of the *muhtasib* included the control of urban space and society, and underwent striking changes during the Seljuq period. See Christian Lange, 'Changes in the Office of *Hisba* under the Seljuqs', in Christian Lange and Songül Mecit, eds, *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp. 157–81.
14. This happened, for example, in 497 (1103): the *shihna*, as well as the Abbasid *shurta*, were not able to defend the west bank of Baghdad against the depredations of the 'ayyārūn, causing Caliph al-Mustazhir to ask for the help of the two *naqībs* of Baghdad (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVII, pp. 84–5).
15. Both Abbasid and Seljuq palaces were located on the east bank of Baghdad, while the west bank hosted the most important concentration of Shi'i population in the Karkh area. The two banks were firmly separated by the unpredictable and difficult-to-cross Tigris river, running from north to south.
16. He also studied in detail the wedding of the Seljuq Sultan Tughril Beg to the daughter of the Abbasid caliph. George Makdisi, 'The Marriage of Tughril Beg', *International Journal of Middle-East Studies* I (1970), pp. 259–75, reprinted in *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad* (London, 1990).
17. Al-Bundārī, *Zubdat al-nusra wa nukhbat al-'usra* (*Ta'rīkh dawlat Āl Saljūq*), ed. Lajnat ihyā' al-turāth al-'arabī (Beirut: Dār al-āfāq al-jadīda, 1980), asserts that, through this wedding, 'the two states were united [*imtaẓajat al-dawlatān*]' (p. 13).
18. Compare the pro-Seljuq version of al-Bundārī, *Zubda*, p. 23, with Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, pp. 67, 72, and Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, VIII, p. 357.
19. Al-Bundārī, *Zubda*, p. 45; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, p. 140; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, VIII, p. 391.
20. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, p. 269; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, VIII, p. 451.
21. Sadr al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Nāsir al-Husaynī, *Kitāb akhbār al-dawla al-saljūqiyya. Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, ed. Muhammad Iqbal (Lahore, 1933, reprinted Beirut, 1984).
22. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVII, p. 225; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt*, ed. Hyderabad, p. 113.
23. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVII, p. 325; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt*, ed. Hyderabad, p. 161; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XII, p. 228–9.
24. In 534 (1139). Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVIII, p. 3; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt*, ed. Hyderabad, p. 174.
25. The chronicles mention dowries (*sadāq* or *mahr*) of 100,000 dinars and more paid by the Abbasid caliphs to their Seljuq wives. In an attempt to prevent the wedding, al-Qā'im asked for three times this sum to give his daughter to Tughril Beg (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, p. 165; al-Bundārī, *Zubda*, p. 21).
26. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVII, p. 207; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt*, ed. Mekka, II, p. 738. Al-Hilla is a little town on the Euphrates, 100 km south of Baghdad, at that time held by a Shi'i Arab dynasty, the Mazyadids.
27. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVIII, pp. 229–30.
28. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVII, p. 80.
29. These two services already existed during the second half of the fifth (eleventh) century, but are increasingly mentioned by the chronicles from the second decade of the following century, especially the *makhzan*.
30. This title is first used in the chronicles in 529 (1135) (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVII, p. 295), but the biographical dictionaries mention an Abbasid *ustādh al-dār* as soon as 519 (1125) (see Ibn al-Najjār, *Dhayl ta'rīkh Baghdād*, ed. Mustafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Atā [Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1997], XIX, 178 [#1018]: 'Izz al-Dawla ibn al-Muttalib, d. 523 [1129]).

31. At least none is recorded afterwards in the chronicles. The *khutba* of 556 (1161) was pronounced in favour of Arslān Shāh, another nephew of Mas'ūd and the father of Tughril III (Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, IX, pp. 444–6).
32. The most extreme example was the siege of Baghdad by the Seljuq pretender to the sultanate, Mas'ūd, who took the city in 530 (1135). In a period of Seljuq rivalries and instability, Mas'ūd stayed 11 times in the Abbasid capital between 526 (1131) and 546 (1151).
33. George Makdisi links this fact to the sultanian attempt to marry the caliph's daughter ('The Marriage of Tughril Beg', p. 262).
34. Al-Bundārī says that this mosque still existed at the time when he was writing, in the first half of the sixth (thirteenth) century; the rest of Tughril's city seems to have disappeared at that time (Al-Bundārī, *Zubda*, p. 10).
35. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, p. 62.
36. During the time of the Great Seljuqs, such riots (*fitnas*) nevertheless occurred in 451 (1059), 458 (1065), 465 (1073), 466 (1074), twice in 478 (1085), twice in 479 (1086), and again in 480 (1088), 482 (1089) and 487 (1094).
37. Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, VIII, p. 475; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, p. 298.
38. Like the madrasa Tājiyya founded by Tāj al-Mulk for the Shafi'i in 480 (1087) (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, p. 271), and the Hanafi madrasa founded by the Seljuq princess Tarkān Khātūn, wife of Malik Shāh and mother of Mahmūd, at an unknown date (but which was destroyed on caliphal orders in 496 [1102–3] – *ibid.*, XVII, p. 81). Two other famous earlier establishments were founded by Seljuq officials in different districts of Baghdad: the madrasa Nizāmiyya, built for the Shafi'i by the Persian vizier, Nizām al-Mulk, in 457–59 (1065–7), south of the caliphal palaces (*ibid.*, XVI, p. 91), and the Hanafi madrasa attached to the shrine (*mashhad*) of Abū Hanīfa, founded by the 'amīd and *mustawfī* Sharaf al-Mulk Abū Sa'd in 459 (1067), north of the Seljuq areas, in al-Rusāfa, on the east bank (*ibid.*, XVI, p. 100; al-Bundārī, *Zubda*, p. 33; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt*, ed. *Belgeler*, p. 149).
39. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, p. 298.
40. These works started in 502 (1108) and were completed in 509 (1115) (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVII, pp. 112, 143).
41. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVII, p. 194; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt*, ed. Mekka, II, pp. 722–3.
42. A conflict of power between the Caliph al-Muqtafi and Mas'ūd followed what proved to be the last Seljuq attempt of this kind (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVIII, p. 49).
43. This happened in 496 (1102–3) (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVII, p. 81).
44. The famous Shaykh Abū Ja'far al-Tūsī, a renowned Shi'i *faqih*, had his home of al-Karkh looted, and the chair (*kursī*) he used for preaching *kalām* was burnt in 449 (1057). He had already fled Baghdad (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, p. 16; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, VIII, p. 340; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt*, ed. *Belgeler*, p. 39).
45. See note 37.
46. It was the madrasa founded by the Hanbali qadi Abū Sa'd al-Mukharrimī (d. 513 [1119]) (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVIII, p. 173 [#4259]; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl 'alā tabaqāt al-hanābila*, ed. Abū Hāzim Usāma b. Hasan and Abū al-Zahrā' Hāzim 'Alī Bahjat [Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1417 (1997)], III, p. 137 [#67]). It subsequently took the name of the well-known ascetic 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, who taught there from 528 (1133) until his death in 561 (1165).

47. The most famous members of the family were the qadi Abū Ya'ālā ibn al-Farrā' (d. 458 [1066]) (Ibn Abī Ya'ālā, *Tabaqāt al-hanābila*, ed. Abū Hāzim Usāma b. Hasan and Abū al-Zahrā' Hāzim 'Alī Bahjat [Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1997], II, pp. 166–95) and his son Abū al-Husayn Muhammad, known as Ibn Abī Ya'ālā (d. 526 [1131]), who dedicated a biographical dictionary to his *madhhab*, the *Tabaqāt al-hanābila* (Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, III, p. 147 [#76]).
48. Five Hanafi madrasas existed in Baghdad at this time; four of them were built by Seljuq sponsors.
49. Since only 86 of the 211 Hanafi *fuqahā'* present in Baghdad during the period were of Baghdadi origin (45 per cent), the same was true of 13 of the 17 identified Hanafi madrasa-teachers in the Abbasid capital (76 per cent).
50. Nūr al-Hudā Abū Tālib al-Zaynabī (d. 512 [1118]), the Hashimite *naqīb*, held the teaching position in Abū Hanīfā's *mashhad* for 50 years. After his death, his son Abū al-Qāsim (d. 543 [1149]) succeeded him (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVII, p. 166 [#3868]; al-Qurashī, Ibn Abī al-Wafā' 'Abd al-Qādir al-Muhammad, *al-Jawāhir al-mudiyya fī tabaqāt al-hanafīyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Fattāh Muhammad al-Hulw ([n.p.] , 1398 [1978]), II, p. 133 [#525]; II, 568 [#970]).
51. The Lamghānī family settled in Baghdad during the second half of the fifth (eleventh) century, and became active in the juridical field as legal witnesses (*shuhūd*) and *fiqh*-teachers. Three of the five Lamghānī known from the period taught in various Hanafi madrasas in Baghdad: Abū Muhammad 'Abd al-Malik (d. 527 [1133]) (Ibn al-Najjār, *Dhayl*, XVI, p. 52 [#31]), and his two nephews Abū Yūsuf Ismā'īl (d. 536 [1142]) (al-Qurashī, *Jawāhir*, I, p. 413 [#338]) and Abū 'Abdallāh Muhammad (d. 554 [1159]) (Ibn al-Dubaythī, *Dhayl ta'rikh Madīnat al-Salām Baghdād*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf [Baghdad: Matba'at Dār al-salām, 1974], II, p. 39 [#248]).
52. High Abbasid officials like the *sāhib al-makhzan* Kamāl al-Dīn ibn Talha (d. 556 [1161]) and the *ustādh al-dār* Fakhr al-Dawla ibn al-Muttalib (d. 578 [1183]) founded Shafi'i madrasas near the caliphal precincts (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVIII, pp. 10, 200; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-udabā' aw iršād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb* [Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1411 (1991)], IV, p. 111 [#579]; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, IX, p. 318).
53. Out of the 97 foreign *fuqahā'* who settled in Baghdad during this period, 55 were Shafi'i, 21 Hanafi and 21 Hanbali.
54. The most important Baghdadi *ribāts* at that time were the Zawzanī and the Bistāmī on the west bank, named after their respective shaykhs, Abū al-Hasan al-Zawzanī (d. 451 [1059]) (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, p. 59 [#3367]) and Abū al-Hasan al-Bistāmī (d. 493 [1100]) (ibid., XVII, p. 57 [#3696]; Ibn al-Najjār, *Dhayl*, XVIII, p. 130 [#67]), and two institutions of the east bank, the *ribāt* of Abū Sa'd the Sufi (or *ribāt* of the Shaykh al-Shuyūkh), directed by Abū Sa'd al-Nīsābūrī (d. c.477–9 [1084–86]), Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, p. 235 [#3533]), and the *ribāt* of the *khādim* Bahrūz, next to the Nizāmiyya madrasa (ibid., XVIII, p. 46 [#4116]).
55. Out of 71 Baghdadi Sufis, 14 (20 per cent) belonged to one of those families.



56. Abū Sa'd al-Nīsābūrī had a good relationship with Malik Shāh, as well as with Nizām al-Mulk, and supported Ash'ari preachers sent by him (Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, VIII, p. 450; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir and Mahmūd al-Arnā'ūt [Damascus-Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1410 (1989)], V, p. 344; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, pp. 181–2). His son Abū al-Barakāt (d. 541 [1146]) and grandson 'Abd al-Rahīm (d. 580 [1184]) were close to powerful viziers, respectively al-Zaynabī and Ibn Ra'īs al-ru'asā' (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVIII, p. 9; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, X, p. 61). The Abbasid caliph sent 'Abd al-Rahīm as an ambassador to Salāh al-Dīn (Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, XI, p. 509).
57. Ibn al-Najjār, *Dhayl*, XX, p. 116 (#1268).
58. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVIII, p. 180 (#4270); Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, ed. Ihsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-thaqāfa, [1968]), III, p. 204 (#393); al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya al-kubrā*, ed. Mahmūd Muhammad al-Tanāhī and 'Abd al-Fattāh Muhammad al-Halū ([n.p.]: Matba'at 'Isā al-Bābā al-Halabī wa shurakā'ihī, 1386 [1967]), VII, p. 173 (#881); al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarājim al-sādat al-sūfiyya aw Tabaqāt al-Munāwī al-kubrā*, ed. 'Abd al-Hamid Sālih Hamdān (Cairo[?]: Maktabat al-Azhariyya li-l-turāth, 1994[?]), I, p. 674 (#423).
59. He is said to have died over the age of 100, at the end of the sixth (twelfth) century or the beginning of the seventh (thirteenth) (Ibn al-Najjār, *Dhayl*, XX, p. 111 [#1260]).
60. With the exception of the famous Shafi'i Abū Bakr al-Shāshī, who was *qādī al-quḍāt* from 478 (1086) to his death in 488 (1095). He owed his nomination to the vizier Abū Shujā', who recommended him to the Abbasid caliph (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVII, pp. 27–9 (#3653); al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, IV, p. 202 [#348]). During the last half-century of Buyid rule, Abbasid *qādī al-quḍāt* were chosen from among Hanafi and Shafi'i jurists (John Donohue, *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq 334 H./945 to 403 H./1012: Shaping Institutions for the Future*, Islamic History and Civilization 44 [Leyden, 2003], pp. 298–9).
61. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, XVI, pp. 249–52; al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhīr al-mudiyya fī tabaqāt al-hanafiyya* (Hyderabad: Dairu'l maarif 'losmania, Osmania Oriental Publications Series [Old Series], DN 7 (1332 [1914]), II, p. 96 (#290).
62. The following observations are based on the statistical study of a prosopographical database gathering 2,637 notices of persons who lived in Baghdad or visited the city between 447 (1055) and 600 (1204). This database was built on information from Arabic sources (biographical dictionaries and chronicles) concerning the period. See Vanessa Van Renterghem, 'Les élites bagdadiennes au temps des Seldjoukides', unpublished doctoral thesis (Université Paris 1—Panthéon Sorbonne, 2004), Chapter 1.
63. Of the 2,637 individuals in the database, 1,129 were Baghdadi by birth and residence, and died in the city. Of the 1,508 others (visitors, immigrants and emigrants), 568 (38 per cent) were from Iranian provinces: 282 from eastern Iran, 133 from central Iran, and 153 from western Iran.
64. Links with Kurdish areas are also attested for the period. See Vanessa Van Renterghem, 'Invisibles ou absents? Questions sur la présence kurde à Bagdad aux V<sup>e</sup>–VI<sup>e</sup>/XI<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècles', *Études kurdes* 10 (2009), pp. 21–52.

# Two Mirrors for Princes Fabricated at the Seljuq Court: Nizām al-Mulk's *Siyar al-mulūk* and al-Ghazālī's *Nasīhat al-mulūk*

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This chapter is divided into two sections, dealing respectively with the *Siyar al-mulūk* (or *Siyāsāt-nāma*), ascribed to the famous Seljuq vizier Nizām al-Mulk<sup>1</sup>, and the bipartite *Nasīhat al-mulūk* ascribed to al-Ghazālī. It will demonstrate that the *Siyar al-mulūk* was not written by Nizām al-Mulk, and that al-Ghazālī was the author of only the first part of the *Nasīhat al-mulūk*. In the case of the *Siyar al-mulūk*, and using modern legal definitions (as given, for example, in UK legislation in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act dated 1988), we face an example of false attribution intentionally made by Muhammad Mu'izzī Nīshābūrī (d. 518–22 [1124–8]) – the most famous court poet of the Seljuq dynasty, who had the position and honorific title of 'Master of Poets' (Amīr al-shu'arā') at court. Of course, modern laws cannot generally be applied retroactively. But the actions committed by him were illegal in those times too. All facts attest that Mu'izzī not only attributed the *Siyar al-mulūk* to Nizām al-Mulk, but also fabricated this compilation, trying his hand as a prose writer. The paper also outlines his counterfeiting technology and his reasons for undertaking such a risky endeavour.

## I. The *Siyar al-mulūk*

### *Previous Textual Studies*

There were at least five scholars involved in studying, publishing and translating the *Siyar al-mulūk* in different countries.

The text was published for the first time in two parts – the Persian text and its annotated French translation – by Charles Schefer, in 1891 and 1893 respectively. In 1932, Iranian scholar 'Abd al-Rahīm Khalkhālī attempted a critical edition of the text. Nine years later, one more edition by the prominent Iranian scholar 'Abbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī was issued in the form of a students'

reader. Then, in 1949, the first Russian translation appeared, by Boris Zakhoder. Eleven years later, Hubert Darke translated the text into English for the first time, also preparing a critical edition of the Persian text. He then published his second, revised translation. More recently, Iranian scholar Ja'far Shi'ār published a critical edition of the text based on a different version.<sup>2</sup> Today, one more critical edition of the text is being prepared for publication by another Iranian scholar Mahmūd 'Ābidī. To my knowledge, up to the present time, the *Siyar al-mulūk* has already been translated into at least 11 languages, and republished innumerable times in Iran, as the first political treatise written in Persian.

There are many different copies of the text, but two main versions can be inferred from all of these copies. The first represents the texts descending or directly copied from the so-called Urūmiya photocopy of 564 (1168). This photocopy is stated to have been transcribed by order of Ālp Jamāl al-Dīn, who, thanks to his position as Amīr Hājib (master chamberlain),<sup>3</sup> was a state figure of the highest rank (presumably, his name was Ilqafshat/Ilfaqshat b. Qaymāz [ایلقشت / ایلقشت بن قیماز / قایماز], master chamberlain of the Seljuq sultan Muhammad b. Mahmūd b. Muhammad b. Malikshāh)<sup>4</sup> and could hardly have ordered an unreliable copy. Until recently, these copies were used by scholars as the basis of their work with the *Siyar al-mulūk*. The oldest manuscript in this group belonged to Charles Schefer, and had been transcribed in 690 (1291).

Preparing his first edition of the text, Hubert Darke was informed of the existence of a manuscript in Muhammad Nakhjavānī's collection held at the Public Library of Tabriz. The manuscript had been copied in 673 (1274), which makes it just 17 years older than Schefer's copy but a whole century younger than the Urūmiya photocopy. This manuscript represents the second main version of the *Siyar al-mulūk*. Darke used this single copy as the basis for the revised edition of his translation, as did Shi'ār for his edition.

Both 'Abbās Iqbāl and Zakhoder, on the one hand, and Darke and Shi'ār, on the other, conducted serious textual research on the book; but they came to diametrically opposed conclusions, differing on what are key characteristics of any work – genre, authorship and date of writing. 'Abbās Iqbāl and Zakhoder concluded that some chapters had been completed and some had been added by the first editor, a certain copyist named Muhammad Maghribī, after the murder of Nizām al-Mulk, committed by an Ismā'īlī in 485 (1092). By contrast, Darke and Shi'ār supposed that the whole text was written by Nizām al-Mulk himself before his murder, and that he was the author of almost the entire book. In his revised edition, Darke even asserts that, with the new-found redaction, 'we have a text closely descended from the author's autograph'.<sup>5</sup>

Having their own followers, both views still survive, supported by additional arguments for and against.<sup>6</sup> They are reflected not only in every new edition of the text but also in separate comments, reviews and research – though without any substantial progress in the final conclusions. Neither faction

provides an answer to the central questions that would incontrovertibly prove their statements: If the text was compiled by Nizām al-Mulk, why are there so many textual, historical, ideological and other discrepancies? And if it was compiled by a certain Muhammad Maghribī, who was he indeed, and why did he fabricate the text and ascribe it to Nizām al-Mulk? And finally, how do its two quite different versions correlate with each other?

To understand what kind of text we are dealing with, it is necessary to outline briefly what we know about the historical situation prior to its compilation. Its two versions cover the historical period over 20 lunar years, i.e. from 479 (1087) – the date mentioned in the Nakhjavānī version (and in some of the copies descending from the Urūmiya protocopy) – to 500 (1107) – the date a *qasīda* in the Urūmiya version is referred to. In addition to this, the historical events below are so closely entwined with and so similar to those related to the counterfeiting of the second part of the *Nasīhat al-mulūk*, ascribed to al-Ghazālī (d. 505 [1111]), that they deserve to be studied and compared in one article.

### *Historical Context*

At the end of 479 (1087), the first visit of Malikshāh and Nizām al-Mulk to Baghdad took place, after their victory over Aleppo. Their joint arrival in Baghdad was aimed to realize the final part of Nizām al-Mulk's plan to establish a good relationship between the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadī bi-Llāh (d. 487 [1094]) and Malikshāh. At the beginning of the next year, 480 (April 1087), Malikshāh gave a daughter of his favourite wife, Turkān-Khātūn, in marriage to al-Muqtadī. This political marriage, organized by Nizām al-Mulk, also answered Turkān-Khātūn's own intentions. Therefore, there was no basis for any open conflict between them – that only happened later. Besides, Turkān-Khātūn seems to have been pregnant at the time. In other words, 479 and 480 were the most lucky and successful years for all the participants in these events. But this situation changed quickly in the coming years.

By the end of 480 (1088), Turkān-Khātūn's daughter bore al-Muqtadī a son, Abū'l-Fazl Ja'far. In the following year, however, relations between the spouses went into such a decline that, upon receiving his daughter's complaint, Malikshāh ordered her to come back with her son to Isfahan; but she died soon after arriving in the city. This chain of events seems to have been one of the main reasons why, a little later, Malikshāh made an irreversible decision to move the Seljuq capital from Isfahan to Baghdad, and to turn al-Muqtadī out of Baghdad. Moreover, Turkān-Khātūn appears to have insisted that Malikshāh force al-Muqtadī to recognize Abū'l-Fazl Ja'far as successor to the Abbasid caliphate, instead of one of al-Muqtadī's other sons. Of course, these plans were in direct conflict with those of Nizām al-Mulk.

Meanwhile, Turkān-Khātūn also gave birth to a son. The son was given the name of Mahmūd and the honorific title of Nāsir al-Dunyā va'l-Dīn. He

became the youngest of Malikshāh's sons who outlived their father – the others being Barkiyāruq, Muhammad-Tapar and Sanjar. According to medieval historians, as an experienced politician and court intriguer (or perhaps, on the contrary, as a solicitous mother), Turkān-Khātūn planned to make Mahmūd the guaranteed successor to the empire of Malikshāh while he was still a child. For this, a special type of document was required from the father. Nizām al-Mulk, who favoured Malikshāh's elder son, Barkiyāruq, as successor, opposed this turn of events. Then Turkān-Khātūn brought over to her side one of her favourites, Tāj al-Mulk (Abū'l-Ghanāyim Marzbān Khusraw al-Shīrāzī). Being responsible for the harem and for raising her young children, he began to hold several important state positions, including the position of managing the private property and treasure of Malikshāh, and also that of head of the *dīvān* of writing and records, or chancery. He also put his own protégé (Majd al-Mulk) at the head of the *dīvān* for property and taxes, thus practically restricting Nizām al-Mulk's power – except in areas related to the army, which was completely devoted to the old vizier. Fearing an attack by the army, Tāj al-Mulk could not legally get rid of the vizier once and for all in order to take his place, but he and Turkān-Khātūn did everything to make Malikshāh take their side, which is eventually what happened.

Judging from the reports of historical chronicles, everyone was very well aware of the conflict and rivalry between Tāj al-Mulk, supported by Turkān-Khātūn, and Nizām al-Mulk. In addition, Tāj al-Mulk is stated by some medieval scholars to have been an ally of one of the leading Ismā'īlīs in Iran, Hasan b. al-Sabbāh, and his agent in the government of Malikshāh, thus having his own wide-ranging plans. 'Abd al-Jalīl Qazvīnī Rāzī, a Shi'a author of the sixth (twelfth) century, in his *Ba'zī masālib al-navāsib* gives the following characteristics of Tāj al-Mulk:

*Tāj al-Mulk nicknamed Marzbān became the ferment of apostasy and global sedition. He was a favourite friend, supporter and ally of [Hasan-i] Sabbāh, and one of the seven people who took an oath of allegiance to him at the beginning.*<sup>7</sup>

تاج الملک لقب مرزبان که خمیرمایه الحاد و فتنه جهان شد و حبيب و حليف و معاهد

[حسن] صباح بود، از آن هفت شخص بود که بیعت اول کردند

In the second half of 483 (1090), Hasan b. al-Sabbāh captured the mountain fortress of Alamūt, and fortified it within a short time. This seems to have served as a signal for the Ismā'īlīs' open uprising all over Iran the following year (484), and laid the foundation for an independent state of the Ismā'īlīs to arise in the form of fortress cities scattered around the mountainous regions of the country. In the Ismā'īlīs' own historiography, the capture of Alamūt is considered the beginning of the Alamūt period, which continued until the Mongol invasion and the destruction of Ismā'īlī fortresses by the Mongols in 654 (1256).

The year 484 (1091) was marked by the second visit to Baghdad of Malikshāh, together with Nizām al-Mulk. The visit had no relation to the Ismā'īlīs' uprising and the consolidation of the alliance between caliph and sultan. Quite the contrary: Malikshāh pointedly refused to acknowledge the Caliph al-Muqtadī, acting in a spirit of revenge. During the visit, he announced that he would move the Seljuq capital from Isfahan to Baghdad, ordered Nizām al-Mulk, Tāj al-Mulk and other court dignitaries to start constructing Baghdad residences for themselves and, finally, tried to push al-Muqtadī for a recognition of Abū'l-Fazl Ja'far as the lawful successor to the Abbasid caliphate.

Thus, by Ramadān 485 (October 1092), when Malikshāh intended to visit Baghdad for the third and last time in order to put his plans into effect, Nizām al-Mulk, supported by the army, became the main obstacle both for Malikshāh with Turkān-Khātūn and, of course, for Tāj al-Mulk, who also acted in Hasan b. al-Sabbāh's interests. Therefore, the murder of Nizām al-Mulk during this trip seems to have been inevitable. The Caliph al-Muqtadī, as one of the few remaining political allies of Nizām al-Mulk, could have done nothing to protect him, though he appears to have done everything necessary to protect himself upon receiving Malikshāh's final order to leave Baghdad within ten days.<sup>8</sup> Malikshāh was poisoned and died in Shawwal 485 (November 1092), just a month after the murder of Nizām al-Mulk.

Upon his death the court of Malikshāh fell apart. As a result, all military operations planned by Nizām al-Mulk against the Ismā'īlīs were stopped. Instead, internecine wars began in the Seljuq state. *Divide et impera!* This situation was skilfully exploited by the Ismā'īlīs to strengthen their position. The former officials of Malikshāh found themselves at a loose end and ran to his sons and relatives, who had lined up against each other.

The Master of Poets, Mu'izzī, did not avoid this fate either – though he was stripped of neither his posts nor his titles. And perhaps he chose the only correct survival tactics under such circumstances, although they were not without hypocrisy, or perhaps political prudence: first he praised all the pretenders to the throne, and then was forced to apologize in the *qasīdas* addressed to the winners of internecine wars for the ways in which he had praised their enemies. Such is the unenviable lot of court poets.

Around 498 (1105), or a little earlier, changing addressees and cities, Mu'izzī chose to serve in the circle of Sanjar, who from 490 (1097) arranged his administrative centre in Marv. Evidently, unhappy either with Sanjar's treatment of him or his own low status at court (we can only guess the reasons), he wrote a *qasīda* for him. In the *qasīda*, he complained about his situation, saying that he had served for 30 years and that this was worthy of much more respect.

*Thirty years of service, after all, deserves a certain respect,  
thirty years of respect in service is not to be neglected.*<sup>9</sup>

خدمت سی ساله را آخر بیايد حرمتی،

حرمت سی ساله در خدمت نباشد سوسری

In Jumāda al-ākhira 498 (March 1105), Sanjar's brother Ghiyās al-Dīn Muhammad Tapar b. Malikshāh came to the throne. He was officially recognized by the next Abbasid caliph, al-Mustazhir bi-Llāh (r. 487–512 [1094–118]), as the sultan of the entire Seljuq Empire – 'the Lord of the Universe' (Khudāvand-i 'ālam) following the definition given in the *Siyar al-mulūk* – with a residence in Isfahan. He revived military operations against the Ismā'īlīs, and in 500 (1107) captured two of their fortresses near Isfahan. In one of these – Shāhdiz – the head of the Ismā'īlīs in Iran, namely Ahmad 'Attāsh, whose formal deputy was Hasan b. al-Sabbāh, had hidden for 12 years. This event, even in the Ismā'īlīs' own historiography, is undoubtedly considered a major defeat, after which the Ismā'īlīs lost their influence in the region of Isfahan. The sultan executed 'Attāsh and his son, sending their decapitated heads to the Baghdad caliph. According to statements by historians, in this fortress, which was one of the two main strongholds of the Ismā'īlīs in Iran (the second one was the fortress of Alamūt, headed by Hasan b. al-Sabbāh), a huge amount of wealth was gathered by Ahmad 'Attāsh. It is possible that something like the treasury of the Ismā'īlīs was found in it.<sup>10</sup>

After these last events, Mu'izzī tried to secure himself a status under the new supreme ruler that would have corresponded to his former status at Malikshāh's court. In order to do this, he fabricated the *Siyar al-mulūk* – a strongly anti-Ismā'īlī and even generally anti-Shi'ite text, in which the whole historical situation described above was reflected by him, perhaps, much more recognisably and obviously for his contemporaries than for us. He also wrote a *qasīda* of praise in honour of Muhammad b. Malikshāh's victory over the Ismā'īlīs in 500 and added it to the compiled text, ascribed by him to Nizām al-Mulk. In fact, he used a rather innovative method for his forged compilation: he combined the genre of official juridical documents with the genre of ordinary narrative prose. To see how he did it, we have once again to look at both versions of the text.

### *Historical Criticism*

Apart from the references to the Urūmiya protocopy of 564 (1168), the earliest records of the existence of the *Siyar al-mulūk* in independent sources belong to the beginning of the seventh (thirteenth) century – that is, a whole century later than the date that the text itself indicates. The one direct reference to its existence is confirmed by the direct borrowings from it in the second part of the *Nasīhat al-mulūk*. However, this part cannot be considered an independent source (see below). Therefore, those who have studied the *Siyar al-mulūk* frame

the history of its appearance relying solely on the contents of the text in its various versions. In this respect the foreword is the key part of the text, and the crucial question is: Who wrote it?

### *Foreword*

As a rule, any medieval foreword written by its author in classical style, and usually following a *khutba* ('opening address') would set out answers to a few questions concerning the main text: what motivated the author to start his work, who the author was, what form his writing would take – either collection (*jam'*) and compilation (*ta'lif*), or composition (*tasnif*),<sup>11</sup> and how he would tackle the task he had set for himself in writing his work. In other words, such a pattern was traditionally used by the author to clarify four main questions: who, what, why and how. In many cases, however, forewords deviated from this standard and complete pattern for various reasons. One such reason might be that the author of the work had not himself written a foreword, leaving the door open for a later writer to insert one.

Even today, a foreword written by someone other than the author of the main text can indicate that, for some reason, the main text was not intended for publication, or at least not during its author's lifetime. In such cases, the main text may have been assembled by an editor from the author's private correspondence, memoirs, diaries or official documents, and it is the editor who composes the foreword to the work. This was true for a number of well-known classical Islamic texts. For example, the *Ay farzand* (the *Ayyuhā al-walad*) and the original part of the *Nasihat al-mulūk*, both by al-Ghazālī, were taken by medieval publishers from his private correspondence. Naturally, these texts therefore have no forewords by al-Ghazālī himself – just as their titles also are not his own, but were attributed to these works by those who placed them in the public domain.

### *The Urūmiya Version*

According to the foreword written by a scribe of the private books depository to the *Siyar al-mulūk*, in either 479 (1087) or 484 (1091), Malikshāh ordered Nizām al-Mulk, Tāj al-Mulk and other dignitaries to prepare a report on the current state of the Seljuq Empire and to indicate significant negative developments and violations of revered traditions. This formal order, first responding to the questions 'why' and 'what', was repeated in all copies of the text in this version.

Of all the reports submitted for the highest examination, only the report by Nizām al-Mulk pleased the sultan and was approved by him. But only after the accession of Muhammad b. Malikshāh in 498 (1105) did the scribe decide to present the text to him 'for the sake of the books depository'. He thereby tried to ensure himself a job, renewing his service under the new supreme sultan. This is the sole reason why the text was presented by the scribe. Although, in



Schefer's edition, this reason does not seem so obvious, and the addressee is completely absent, it is clear from the last sentence that some time had passed since the moment of writing:

*A scribe of the depository writings ... has written this kitāb for the sake of service to the depository and presented it. If Allāh so desires, it may be approved. Any pādishāh and any ruler has no other choice but to have and know this copy-book (daftar), especially at the present time.*<sup>12</sup>

ناسخ کتابهای خزانه ... این کتاب از جهت خدمت خزینه نبشت و پیش آورد.  
انشاء الله، پسندیده آید. و هیچ پادشاهی و خداوند فرمانی را از داشتن ودانستن این دفتر  
چاره نیست، خاصه در این روزگار.

Darke's first edition, based on other copies of the *Siyar al-mulūk*, gives much more information, indicating the reason and the addressee clearly:

*At present, a slave who wishes to report on his status to the Lord of the Universe – Ghiyās al-Dunyā va'l-Dīn Muhammad b. Malikshāh, may Allāh exalt him – and renew his service, has written this daftar for the sake of the magnificent book depository, may Allāh fill it, and offered it in service. If Allāh so desires, it may be approved and accepted. Any pādishāh and any ruler has no other choice but to have and know this copy-book, especially at the present time.*<sup>13</sup>

و در این حال چون بنده میخواست که حال خویش پیش خدایگان عالم – غیاث الدین  
والدین محمد ابن ملکشاه، اعلاه الله، بر دارد و خدمت خویش تازه گرداند، این دفتر را از  
جهت خزانه کتب معمور، عمرها الله، نبشت و بخدمت پیش آورد. انشاء الله، پسندیده  
آید و مقبول گردد. و هیچ پادشاهی و خداوند فرمانی را از داشتن ودانستن این دفتر چاره  
نیست، خاصه در این روزگار.

In the final part of his foreword, which follows the table of contents, the scribe made an attempt, firstly, to outline the number of chapters and their length, and secondly, to answer the questions: How did a state document addressed by the grand vizier to the sultan end up in the hands of a scribe, and why did nobody know about this previously? Since this part is repeated in both basic versions, it deserves to be scrutinized separately.

Traditionally, scribes mention themselves only modestly in colophons of manuscripts, if at all. But the point here is not just the obtrusiveness of the copyist and his intention to convince the addressee that he is carrying out almost the last wish of the grand vizier. In the *Urūmiya* version, there is an additional afterword in which all the explanations given by the scribe in his foreword are repeated on behalf of Nizām al-Mulk.

### *The Nakhjavānī Version*

At first glance, Nakhjavānī's copy, deprived of the afterword, appears to have a more authentic foreword, stating at the very beginning that both the foreword and the whole text, consisting of 50 chapters, were compiled by Nizām al-Mulk himself following Malikshāh's order of 479 (1087). However, the foreword was combined with the Urūmiya afterword and revised there in a way that misled some scholars, who prefer to consider the copy as more reliable, and to disregard the Urūmiya version. For several reasons the Nakhjavānī version looks less logical than that of the Urūmiya:

- a) Malikshāh's order seems to have been fulfilled by no other dignitary than Nizām al-Mulk.
- b) The whole text was written by Nizām al-Mulk 'for the sake of the book depository' (as if the grand vizier were an ordinary scribe):

*This slave [Nizām al-Mulk] ... has written this copy (nuskhat) for the sake of the magnificent book depository, may Allāh fill it, and offered it in service. If Allāh so desires, it may be approved and accepted.*<sup>14</sup>

بنده ... این نسخه از بهر خزانه معموره، عمرها الله، نبشت و پیش خدمت آورد.  
انشاء الله که پسندیده آید و مقبول گردد.

- c) The sentence cited suggests that no part of the text had been seen and approved by Malikshāh before, and that the whole book, consisting of 50 chapters, had been submitted for the highest consideration for the first time.
- d) Moreover, we encounter again the same final part of the Urūmiya foreword, located in the same place and provided with the same statements. These are offered by an unnamed 'slave' to whom Nizām al-Mulk handed over the text – without any formal reason at all – before his trip to Baghdad and his murder.

### *The Final Part of the Foreword*

According to the statements given in the final part of the foreword in both versions, Nizām al-Mulk had withdrawn his report, consisting of 39 short chapters (*fasl*) and already approved by Malikshāh, and decided to add to it. After writing 11 more chapters and adding to those already written, the revised report acquired the form we recognize today (or close to it) – that is, the form of a proper book of 50 chapters. Nizām al-Mulk then presented the text not to his addressee, but to the scribe, or slave, whom he named plainly in the Urūmiya afterword as Muhammad Maghribī, or Muhammad the scribe of Malikshāh's private depository.<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that Malikshāh was accompanied by Nizām al-Mulk on his last trip to Baghdad, the text did not reach him, because he was poisoned and died just a month after the murder of

Nizām al-Mulk. That is why the scribe, or slave, having done his work (either by copying or simply saving the text), carefully preserved it until the accession of a new Lord of the Universe (that is, a new supreme Seljuq ruler) – i.e. for at least 13 years.

Shi‘ār’s statement that it is Malikshāh whom the unnamed slave addresses as ‘the Lord of the Universe’<sup>16</sup> in the Nakhjavānī version does not hold water. If this had been so, the slave should have handed the text over to Malikshāh within the month between the murder of Nizām al-Mulk and the death of Malikshāh. However, according to the slave, the political situation was deteriorating sharply after the murder of Nizām al-Mulk, and did not allow him to present the text until ‘justice and Islam have strengthened due to the Lord of the Universe’.

This part of the foreword is the crucial one for finding the counterfeiter out. Undoubtedly, it was not written by Nizām al-Mulk in either version. But it answers the questions of how and by whom the text was compiled to reach its new addressee. Had this part been absent, we could have taken the answers to these questions from the afterword compiled on behalf of Nizām al-Mulk in the Urūmiya version. But in the Nakhjavānī version, the same final statements, written by the unnamed slave, form the only part that clarifies the situation. Without this part, we would never have known all these facts – just as we are ignorant of the equivalent facts with respect to many other authors and books. It was common practice for an author, when he had composed a manuscript, to give it to his addressee or to a copyist – and it was thus absolutely unnecessary to describe such a commonplace procedure in the foreword to the manuscript.

This puzzle can be explained by the location of the final part after the table of contents. It is impossible to see the substantial difference in size between the chapters of the text from the table of contents, which contains just the headings of the 50 chapters without reference to their length. The difference becomes clear only upon skimming over the main text. Upon examination, it is clear that some of the chapters could only be referred to as ‘short’ (*mukhtasar*). Some of them consist literally of only five to seven sentences, while others spread over five to seven pages. In the Urūmiya afterword, the phrase ‘quite short/abbreviated’ (*bas mukhtasar*), focusing on the same short chapters, is once again located in the right place, explaining their difference in length to the addressee, who is supposed to have read the whole text.

In short, all such clarifications in the final part of the foreword show that the scribe, or slave, had certainly read the whole text and knew it very well, and that the foreword had been compiled by him after completion of the book. Keen to convince Muhammad b. Malikshāh that the book had been written by Nizām al-Mulk, he is likely to have been afraid of being suspected of its fabrication, or at least to have felt uncomfortable not only because of the difference in length between some chapters, but also because of the much more important difference in style among them. In other words, he was trying to explain the

latter by drawing the addressee's attention to the former – a merely polemical and literary device. This appears to be the only reason why he emphasizes the number 39 to his addressee. Upon reading the headings in the table of contents, this figure might have reminded Muhammad b. Malikshāh of a well-known list of duties composed by the grand vizier, thus explaining the different style of the short chapters. It was these short chapters that were approved by Malikshāh, after which the text became subject to change and addition, allegedly by Nizām al-Mulk, for whom the literary activity seems to have been extra-curricular, and whose authorship needed to be insistently asserted by the scribe.

His insistence is clearly seen in the Urūmiya version, where he asserted Nizām al-Mulk's authorship three times: in the foreword on behalf of himself, in the afterword on behalf of Nizām al-Mulk, and in the *qasīda*, again on behalf of himself. Such insistence gave a double effect. In the Nakhjavānī version, the foreword was rewritten on behalf of Nizām al-Mulk, the 'scribe' remained an unidentified 'slave' in the final part of it, and the afterword containing the scribe's name and position was entirely withdrawn from the text. Nor do we find there the *qasīda* in which the scribe's intention to submit the text in person and to ensure himself a job at Muhammad b. Malikshāh's court becomes explicit. Therefore, the Nakhjavānī version can doubtless be considered secondary to the Urūmiya version, or as a revised edition of it intentionally made by a medieval editor. He might conceivably have understood very clearly the scribe's insistence on asserting Nizām al-Mulk's authorship, and made the necessary changes to the Urūmiya version. In my opinion, this is how the two versions correlate with each other.

Hence, to understand why the scribe was worried about the differences in length and style between various chapters, we need only attend to the foreword of the primary Urūmiya version, noting a number of its details that are clearly discernible, but that have slipped out of researchers' field of vision. The first of these concerns the form of the response to Malikshāh's order.

### *The Form of the Reply*

Malikshāh's order does not even imply that anyone should have submitted a book in its modern sense to the sultan for approval. If it had, Malikshāh would probably have received a whole series of books of similar contents from several dignitaries. His remark on Nizām al-Mulk's reply is quite complimentary:

*These chapters have been written exactly as I desired; there is nothing to add to them; I will make this book my guide and follow its precepts.*

این همه فصلها چنان نوشته است که دل من خواست. براین مزیدی نیست. من این کتاب را امام خویش کردم و بر این خواهم رفت.

(Translation: Hubert Darke<sup>17</sup>)

Darke's first edition adds the following phrase after Malikshāh's words:

*Thereafter he always went by this book, and gave his commands and wrote his treaty ('ahd-nāma) according to these chapters.*<sup>18</sup>

پس بموجب این فصلها فرمانها داد و عهدنامه نوشت و بر آن همی رفت.

The small semantic shift made in the translation and the understanding of the words *fasl* and *kitāb* led the first word to be understood as 'chapter' and the second as 'book', which is generally correct – but not for the court language of that period.

*Kitāb* is a word that refers generally to everything that is written down, and not just to a book. In bureaucratic court language, *fasl* means 'decision, or verdict, or opinion', and goes with the verb 'to say' or 'to expound' (فصل گفتن). Moreover, each *fasl* in this sense needs the sultan's final approval. This can easily be illustrated by several examples taken from the texts of that period. Here is just one of them, taken from the second letter written by al-Ghazālī to Sanjar:

*The tradition of Muslim scholars, when they come to the Majlis of the Malik of Islām, is to expound a decision consisting of four things: a prayer, compliment, counsel and elimination of needs.*

عادت علماء اسلام چون بمجلس ملک اسلام رسند، آنست که فصلی گویند مشتمل بر چهار چیز: دعا و ثنا و نصیحت و رفع حاجت.

Sanjar's approval, cited by a medieval compiler of al-Ghazālī's letters, reads:

*Now we have a request for you to write down this decision, which came [from your lips], with your own handwriting, so that it can be read to us and we can send copies of it everywhere ...*<sup>19</sup>

اکنون التماس آنست که این فصل که رفت، بخط خویش بنویسی تا بر ما می خوانند و ما نسخه آن باطراف بفرستیم...

In other words, what was written by Nizām al-Mulk – and, judging by the statement of the scribe in the Urūmiya version, by a number of other state figures – was not a book. On the contrary, this was something more laconic, which could be easily compared with the similar laconic texts submitted by other state figures and drawn upon selectively, and by means of which *farmān*-decrees could be issued and systems of governance could be arranged more correctly. And, of course, originally it carried no title – neither *Siyar al-mulūk* nor *Siyāsāt-nāma*.

If we look at some of the headings given to the chapters of the *Siyar al-mulūk*, we find out that they largely correspond, both thematically and formally, with the headings of a standard work agreement (*muvāza'at*) – that is, an official document similar to a modern contract of employment, consisting of a list of official duties. Such employment contracts for the highest rank of officials were approved in the Ghaznavid era by the sultan himself, written in

the form of a diploma (*‘ahd-nāma*), giving the sultan’s written approval of the duties of the officer in question. Once the list of duties had received royal approval, it was not subject to any further changes – least of all at the wish of the officer who had entered the sultan’s service.

The same practice is shown in Muntajab al-Dīn Juvaynī’s *‘Atabat al-kataba* to have continued during the Seljuq period.<sup>20</sup> The *‘Atabat* presents only the orders and decrees issued on behalf of the sultan in order both to approve the employees’ duties and to address whomever the duties might concern. Fortunately, we have an excerpt taken from a contract of employment and written on behalf of an employee who had applied for the position of ‘house manager’ (*kadkhudā*) of the emir’s son. The excerpt is cited by Abū’l-Fazl Bayhaqī in his *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī*. Notwithstanding their limited number, the headings of the contract articles named *fasl* and listed in the excerpt look very similar to the individual headings in the *Siyar al-mulūk*.

| The <i>Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī</i>                                                                                                                                                                         | The <i>Siyar al-mulūk</i>                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Concerning the palace pages ( <i>ghulāms</i> ) and their master – a full article ( <i>fasl</i> )<br>(و در معنی غلامان سرایی و سالار ایشان – فصلی تمام)                                              | 12th <i>fasl</i> . On sending pages ( <i>ghulāms</i> ) from the court on important business<br>(اندر غلام فرستادن از درگاه در مهمات) |
| Concerning the senior chamberlain and other military leaders – an article<br>(و در معنی حاجب بزرگ و دیگر مقدمان لشکر – فصلی)                                                                        |                                                                                                                                      |
| On going on a march, dismounting and gathering information about enemies – an article<br>(و در باب رفتن و فرود آمدن و تنسم اخبار خصمان – فصلی)                                                      | 22nd <i>fasl</i> . On keeping fodder ready at places of dismounting<br>(اندر ساخته داشتن علف در منزها)                               |
| On the salary for the army, the appointment and resignation of the deputy of the military <i>dīvān</i> – an article <sup>21</sup><br>(و در باب بیستگانی لشکر و اثبات و اسقاط نایب دیوان عرض – فصلی) | 23rd <i>fasl</i> . On clarity in the property status of all the army<br>(اندر روشن داشتن اموال جمله لشکر)                            |

The range of responsibilities of Nizām al-Mulk as the ‘top manager’ of the entire state was naturally much wider than that of the ‘house manager’ of the emir’s son, and therefore consisted of 39 articles. As we have seen, these 39 articles were approved by Malikshāh, who issued decrees which were based on them and which were confirmed by royal diploma. Like the sultan’s orders and decrees collected in the *‘Atabat*, Nizām al-Mulk’s contract of employment with Malikshāh undoubtedly followed a set official pattern shared by similar

juridical documents. However, by no stretch of the imagination could it be described as a 'book', 'literary composition', and so on. For an experienced and skilled secretary, drawing up a contract of employment according to this pattern did not take much time. For example, the contract of employment of the emir's son is shown by Bayhaqī to have taken no more than half a day to write. Approximately the same span of time is implied by the scribe both in the final part of the foreword and in the afterword to the *Siṣyar al-mulūk*, when he states that 39 articles were written by Nizām al-Mulk 'extempore' (*bar badīha*).

If we examine even just the three headings cited above from the *Siṣyar al-mulūk*, we discover to our surprise that they refer to the chapters that are 'quite short' (though the twenty-third chapter has a few additions made by the scribe), and we can easily detect their independent and formal style of writing. Each first describes a problem in governing, and then suggests how the problem should be solved by the person in charge – namely, Nizām al-Mulk. Suggesting solutions, these chapters all follow the same grammatical pattern, using impersonal modal verbs: 'it should be that ... or it must be that...', 'it should or must be done', 'it should or must be known', and so on. This pattern, though converted into the passive voice, can also be seen clearly in H. Darke's translation:

***Chapter XII. On sending pages from the court upon important business***

*Pages are frequently sent out from the court, some at the king's behest, mostly not. They are apt to cause trouble to the people and extort money from them. [Supposing there is] a case involving a sum of two hundred dinars, a page goes out and takes five hundred as a perquisite; this causes extreme embarrassment and poverty to the people.*

*Pages should not be sent unless there is an urgent matter, and if they are sent it should be only at the Sublime Command; and they must be given to understand the exact amount due, and they are not to take any more than this by way of perquisite. Then everything will be in order.*<sup>22</sup>

This passage presents one of the duties described in the genuine contract of employment of Nizām al-Mulk without any later additions made by the scribe. It is significant that the same grammatical pattern also exists in the contract of employment that was partially incorporated into the *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī*.

Malikshāh's written approval of Nizām al-Mulk's contract of employment should also have followed approximately the same formal style as that presented by the Ghaznavid emir in the *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī*:

*Then [the answers] in this form were stated. I copied [them] under the fusūl [pl. of fasl] of the contract of employment (muvāza'at), and the amīr put a seal on them, and under it he wrote in his own handwriting: 'The worthy Sir, may Allāh prolong His assistance to him, should rely on these answers which are written by my order and approved with the*

*seal, and show his ability and honesty to counsel on each of these items in order to gain praise and trust in himself, if Allāh so desires*'.<sup>23</sup>

پس بر آن قرار گرفت. و زیر فصول مواضعه نبشتم، و امیر توقیع کرد و زیر آن بخط خویش بنبشت که: "خواجه فاضل، ادام الله تأییده، برین جوابها که بفرمان ما نبشتند و بتوقیع مؤکد گشت، اعتماد کند و کفایت و مناصحت خویش در هر بابی ازین ابواب بنماید تا مستوجب احما و اعتماد گردد، انشاء الله".

Thus, the short *fasl*-chapters in the *Siyar al-mulūk* closely correspond to the contract *fasl*-articles cited in the *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī* in terms of their subject, form, brevity, grammatical pattern, the short span of time necessary to compile them, and the sultan's response to them. Therefore, they certainly represent the pattern of writing of contract documents. The pattern can also be seen clearly in other short chapters of the *Siyar al-mulūk*. Moreover, in these short chapters there are no historical examples or anecdotes, just as there is no indication of the sultan's duties, let alone criticism of his actions. All of these appear, in one form or another, in the long chapters. Following the pattern in these long chapters, we can separate the genuine parts of the contract of employment of Nizām al-Mulk from the later changes and additions made by the scribe. In my opinion, this separation should be understood as the main principle governing the next editions of the *Siyar al-mulūk*.

Working as a scribe in Malikshāh's private depository, Maghribī had access to state documents. Having at his disposal the contract of employment of Nizām al-Mulk, each of whose articles was dedicated to one of the numerous duties of the vizier, Maghribī decided, so to speak, to enliven its impersonal style with examples and stories taken by him from various types of historical literature. This explains all the discrepancies that have been discovered in the *Siyar al-mulūk* and mentioned by modern scholars.<sup>24</sup> Having plenty of time at his disposal during internecine wars, Maghribī also decided to write at least 11 more chapters and add them to the book. Naturally, he could not find historical 'decorations' for all of the vizier's duties. Some chapters thus retained their original pattern, and remained 'quite short'.

Since the *Siyar al-mulūk* originally represented the contract of employment of Nizām al-Mulk, Maghribī had to provide it with his own foreword. In the foreword, he had to answer four traditional questions: who, what, why and how. To this end, he had to remind his addressee of a rather ordinary situation when Malikshāh called a state council or arranged a reception. The only purpose of such a reminder was to assert Malikshāh's preference for Nizām al-Mulk's point of view over the views of others. As is shown by the historical context described above, neither the year 479 nor 484, assigned by Maghribī to this event, correlates with the script proposed by him. In 479 there seems to have been no obvious reason for Malikshāh to concern himself with the problem of improving his own government and to ask for various opinions and advice. Everything was going quite well. The year 484 does not correspond



with the preference given by him to Nizām al-Mulk over Tāj al-Mulk supported by Turkān-Khātūn. In other words, Maghribī could have assigned any other date to this event in order to explain the gap between Nizām al-Mulk's withdrawal of the initial short version of the text and the submission of its final 'improved' version. The need to disguise his own voluminous fabrication, and the combination of two contrasting patterns within the work, required a longer interval to have elapsed between the two versions.

Worried about the clear difference in length, and especially in style, between the text chapters, Maghribī attempted to prove Nizām al-Mulk's authorship by adding the afterword, with his statements repeated this time on behalf of Nizām al-Mulk. Not satisfied with the compiled text, he decided also to adorn it with a postscript *qasīda* in praise of the Sultan Muhammad b. Malikshāh, in which he tried once again to attribute the text to Nizām al-Mulk.

### *The Qasīda*

Unfortunately, with the exception of Schefer, scholars have not published the *qasīda* together with the main text of the *Siyar al-mulūk*. If they had, the false attribution of the text to Nizām al-Mulk would have been identified previously. In spite of the fact that the *qasīda* is inseparable from the *Siyar al-mulūk*, it simply vanished from researchers' view for more than 100 years. Since the *qasīda* is quite informative, it is necessary to prove that it belongs to Muhammad Maghribī. Of the 54 distichs (*bayt*) of the *qasīda*, the first 21 are in praise of the book, the following 26 are panegyrics for Muhammad b. Malikshāh, the next four are intended to describe the poet, and the final three resume the praise of the Sultan. Some of the verses in praise of the book use practically the same turns of phrase that were used by Muhammad Maghribī in the afterword written by him on behalf of Nizām al-Mulk (see below).

### *Qasīda* in praise of the happy Sultan Ghiyās al-Dīn Muhammad b. Malikshāh قصیده در مدح سلطان سعید غیاث الدین محمد ابن ملکشاه

|   |                                                                                                                              |                                                                        |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | This book is a sea, full of diverse pearls, or a garden to enchant the soul, full of diverse fruits.                         | بحر است این کتاب پر از گوناگون گهر<br>یا باغ جانفزای پر از گوناگون ثمر |
| 2 | A garden, if in the garden there is a place for calculating [the harvest], a sea, if in the sea there is a place for pearls. | باغست اگر بیاض بود موضع شمار<br>بحرست اگر به بحر بود موضع درر          |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                     |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3  | Each chapter in it is like a tree [grown] from the foundation, its fruits are all wonderful, and its leaves are all choice.                                         | هر فصل اندرو چو درختیست از نهاد<br>بارش همه غرایب و برگش همه غرر    |
| 4  | It is a treasure full of marvels, and a fount full of rarities, it is a scroll full of novelties, and a casket full of pearls.                                      | پرطرف گنجیست پر عجایب و کانیست<br>درجیست پر بدایع و درجیست پر گهر   |
| 5  | Its roots are all rarities, and its shoots are all beneficial. Its chapters are all meaningful, and its comments are all homilies.                                  | اصلش همه نوادر و فرعش همه مفید<br>فصلش همه معانی شرحش همه عبر       |
| 6  | There is seriousness [in it], advice, wisdom, examples and narration, the tales in it are innumerable, and the stories in it are countless.                         | جدست و پند و حکمت و امثال و داستان<br>بیحد درو حکایت و بیمر درو سمر |
| 7  | Its style is flawless and as high as the Heavens, its meaning is like Venus, shining at dawn.                                                                       | الفاظ او مهذب و عالی چو آسمان<br>معنی ازو چو زهره تابان گه سحر      |
| 8  | [There are in it] the custom, tradition and life of crown-keeping <i>shāhs</i> , the arrangement of the kingdom and the people, the determination of good and evil. | آیین و رسم و سیرت شاهان تاجدار<br>ترتیب ملک و ملت و تقدیر خیر و شر  |
| 9  | You will clearly see in it descriptions of feasts and palaces, you will find hidden in it descriptions of battles and of attack and retreat.                        | بینی درو عیان صفت بزم و بارگاه<br>یابی درو نهان صفت رزم و کروفر     |
| 10 | The acquisition of property and belongings, the ordinances of justice and religion, the organization of troops and the determination of time.                       | تحصیل مال و ملک و آیین داد و دین<br>تدبیر کار لشکر و تقدیر روزگار   |
| 11 | One can find in it the way of the wisher of evil and of the wisher of good, the means to attract benefit and the methods to avoid loss.                             | پیدا درو طریقت بدخواه و نیکخواه<br>هنجار جر منفعت و رای دفع ضرر     |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                        |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12 | Every word and every meaning that are contained in its chapters is dearer than youth and sweeter than sugar.                                                    | هر لفظ و هر معانی کاندر فصول اوست<br>نیکوتر از جوانی و شیرینتر از شکر  |
| 13 | It is free from sarcasm and innovation and purged of fancy, it is worthy as knowledge and as necessary as rain.                                                 | صافی ز هزل و بدعت و پاکیزه از هوا<br>شایسته همچو دانش و بایسته چون مطر |
| 14 | From reading it, boredom will not overcome the reader, <sup>25</sup> everyone will gain insight who will honour it with his sight.                              | از خواندنش نگیرد خواننده را ملال<br>گردد بصیر هر که گمارد برو بصر      |
| 15 | For every story [in it] there is an argument from an <i>āyat</i> of the Qur'ān, for every chapter [in it] there is a tradition from the words of the Messenger. | هر قصه را ز آیت قرآن یکی دلیل<br>هر فصل را ز قول پیامبر یکی خبر        |
| 16 | From any speech which you recall, it has a sign, from any art whose name you mention, it has a trace.                                                           | از هر سخن که یاد کنی اندرو نشان<br>از هر هنر که نام بری اندرو اثر      |
| 17 | A code of the customs of eminent luminaries, a list of the schedules of crown-bearing <i>shāhs</i> .                                                            | قانون رسمهای بزرگان نامدار<br>فهرست کارنامه شاهان تاجور                |
| 18 | Everyone who reads this and puts it into practice, will eternally be successful, do not doubt this.                                                             | هر کس که این بخواند و بود کاربند این<br>اقبال جاودان بودش بیگمان بپر   |
| 19 | A religious and righteous <i>shahin-shah</i> deserves a compilation-souvenir of Nizām, the well-living.                                                         | اندرخور شهنشه دین دار دادور<br>تالیف یادگار نظام نکوسیر                |
| 20 | Never before has a shah seen another vizier like this, never before has anyone created another book like this.                                                  | هرگز شهی ندید وزیری دگر چنین<br>هرگز کسی نکرد کتابی چنین دگر           |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                        |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 21 | This blessed copy-book of the vizier of the emperors, may it be auspicious for a religious and righteous shah!                                                 | این دفتر مبارک دستور خسروان<br>فرخنده باد بر شه دین دار و دادگر        |
| 22 | Sultan Ghiyās-i Dīn-i Muhammad, that Muhammad <sup>26</sup> to whom God gave the throne to triumph over the enemies of religion.                               | سلطان غیاث دین محمد محمد آنکه<br>دادش خدای عرش بر اعدای دین ظفر        |
| 23 | The <i>shāh</i> , on the royal throne in the palace of religion, is a <i>shāhīn-shah</i> like his grandfather and a <i>shāh</i> like his father. <sup>27</sup> | شاهی که بر سریر شاهی در سرای دین<br>شاهینشاهیست چون جد و شاهست چون پدر |
| 24 | The son will be a sultan, whose father is Malik [Malikshāh], the father [Ālp-Arslān] will be an emperor whose son is Malik.                                    | سلطان بود پسر که پدر باشدش ملک<br>خسرو بود پدر که ملک باشدش پسر        |
| 25 | In order to sustain his victory constantly, divine fortune will frequent the place, where he has occasion to pass.                                             | دولت برای نصرت پیرویش مدام<br>آنجا کند گذار که او را بود گذر           |
| 26 | Conquest and victory are ever more in love with his sword and arrow than is the heart of the pilgrim with the stone [of the Ka'ba].                            | فتح و ظفر همیشه برآن تیغ و تیر او<br>عاشقترند از آنچه دل حاج بر حجر    |
| 27 | If they write his name on a thorn and on granite, from the thorn a rose will grow, and from the granite – silver and gold.                                     | بر خار و خاره گر بنویسند نام او<br>از خار گل بروید و از خاره سیم و زر  |
| 28 | Although there is a great distance from heaven to earth, although is plenty of difference between the sea and a pool, <sup>28</sup>                            | گر چه ز چرخ هست بسی بعد تا ثری<br>ورچه ز بحر هست بسی فرق تا شمر        |
| 29 | Consider the former (heaven) as earth next to his fortune, and regard the latter (the sea) as a pool next to his generosity. <sup>29</sup>                     | آنها به جنب دولت او چون ثری شناس<br>وین را به جنب همت او چون شمر شمر   |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                        |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 30 | As soon as the wind of the sword of majesty blew in the world,<br>as soon as the scent of his justice and fervour found the dry and moist [things],                     | تا باد تیغ هیبت او جست در جهان<br>تا بوی عدل و همت او یافت خشک و تر    |
| 31 | a partridge built a nest in the eyelash of a falcon,<br>and a gazelle went with a lion cub to the watering place.                                                       | تیهو نهاد بر مژه باز آشیان<br>و آهو رفت با پسر شیر بآب خور             |
| 32 | As if he had inherited all three matters: knowledge and bravery from 'Alī and justice from 'Umar.                                                                       | گوی بدو رسید بمیراث هر سه کار<br>علم و شجاعت از علی و داد از عمر       |
| 33 | O shadow of God of the world over all creatures,<br>Sun of emperors and the Sultan of the sea and land,                                                                 | ای سایه خدای جهان بر جهانیان<br>خورشید خسروانی و سلطان بحر و بر        |
| 34 | all the <i>shāhs</i> are like a necklace and your being is the middle stone, <sup>30</sup><br>the Universe is like a garden, and in it is the presence of your justice. | شاهان همه چو عقده و هستی تو واسطه<br>گیتی چو روضه است و درو داد تو حضر |
| 35 | The necklace will not be beautiful without a middle stone,<br>the kingdom will not have elegance and an aura without justice.                                           | مر عقده را نباشد بی واسطه جمال<br>مر ملک را نباشد بی داد زیب و فر      |
| 36 | Your age has become an ornament to the eras of emperors.<br>Your order turned away the danger arising from the rebels' ways.                                            | عهد تو شد طراز تواریخ خسروان<br>رسم تو برد از سیر سرکشان خطر           |
| 37 | From the excess of art, which you always show artfully,<br>as if the Universe shrank to the world of art.                                                               | از بس هنرکه از هنر آری همی بدید<br>گوی جهان مختصری عالمی هنر           |
| 38 | You are reasonable and pure of soul, if in the soul for reason<br>might be a space and is a worthy place.                                                               | عقلی وجان پاک اگر جان عقل را<br>ممکن شود مکان و بود جای معتبر          |
| 39 | The entire vault of Heaven girds up its loins for the service to the one,<br>who girded up his loins for the service to you.                                            | بندد کمر بخدمت آنکس همی فلک<br>دریست سوی خدمت تو بر میان کمر           |

|    |                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                     |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 40 | And for him who opens his lips [lit: tongue] to compliment you, the Worshipped one will open a thousand gates of happiness.                      | وآنکس که او زبان به ثناء تو برگشاد<br>ایزد گشایش زسعادت هزار در     |
| 41 | Your enemy will not be equal to you on the day of battle, if [even all] the people of the day of resurrection assemble on the field [of battle]. | خصم تو برنیاید با تو بروز جنگ<br>گر خلق حشر جمله بمیدان کشد حشر     |
| 42 | Your arrow like the arrow of death will fly from the soul [lit: from the liver], if your enemy makes a shield from hundreds of plates.           | تیرت چو تیر مرگ برون پرد از جگر<br>گر دشمن تو از سد سندان کند سپر   |
| 43 | A soul that [was] against you has departed the world, <sup>31</sup> without a doubt, in the other world it will reside in Hell.                  | جانی که برخلاف تو رفت ازجهان برون<br>بیشک بدان جهان بودش مستقر سقر  |
| 44 | Your insignificant slaves in worth and rank are Isfandīyār, and Rustam son of Dastān, and aged Zāl.                                              | هستند بندگان کمینت بقدر و جاه<br>اسفندیار و رستم دستان و زال زر     |
| 45 | No one can escape from fate and destiny, your sword has become like fate, and your command like destiny,                                         | ن تواند از قضا وقدر کس گریختن<br>تیغ تو چون قضا شد و امر تو چون قدر |
| 46 | Since after this you will take from the mischief-makers all the gold there is, like the gold dug up in the districts.                            | ازچونکه بعد ازین بستانی ازمفسدان<br>هر زر که هست همچو زر کوه در کور |
| 47 | For the persuasion, promise and reliance (on Allāh) that you have, God will give you everything that has appeared in your thoughts.              | این اعتقاد وعهد وتوکل که مر ترا ست<br>بدهد خدایت آنچه ترا رفت برفکر |
| 48 | This long-standing slave, calligrapher, and panegyrist has the rights for thirty years of service and more.                                      | این بنده قدیمی وخطاط ومدح گوی<br>دارد حقوق خدمت سی ساله بیشتر       |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                         |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 49 | His verse will follow verse, and his affairs will be in order, if the shah mercifully throws a glance in the direction of the slave.                                | شعرش رسد بشعری و کارش رسد نظام<br>گر شه بسوی بنده برحمت کند نظر         |
| 50 | If he gives him back his name, tradition, and respect, for the slave to revive and become winged and feathered.                                                     | آن نام و رسم و حرمت او باز او دهد<br>تا بنده زنده گردد و باشدش بال و پر |
| 51 | For the firmament to be with an axis, and for the earth to be with stability, for the day to be lit up with the sun, and the night with the brightness of the moon. | تا چرخ را مدار بود خاک را قرار<br>تا روز روشن از خور و شب از ضو قمر     |
| 52 | May everything that the sun shines upon, pass into your possession! May everything that the body of the earth brings forth, be your treasure!                       | ملک تو باد هر چه براو تافت آفتاب<br>گنج تو باد هر چه دهد جرم خاک بر     |
| 53 | May fortune and victory be your helpers in your home! May triumph and success accompany you on your travels!                                                        | یار تو باد دولت و پیروز در حضر<br>جفت تو باد نصرت و اقبال در سفر        |
| 54 | May your day and night be auspicious, and may everything be distant from you that does damage to your magnificence and high rank!                                   | فرخنده باد روز و شب و ز تو دور باد<br>هر چه جلال و جاه ترا ز آن بود ضرر |

The fact that the addressee of the *qasīda* is the sultan already says a lot. It is unlikely that the ‘man in the street’ would dare to write – let alone bring to the sultan – a panegyric, knowing that there was a whole staff of state poets in the service of the great Seljuqs. In other words, the dedication of the *qasīda* to the sultan in itself provides a strong indication that the author was a court poet, and was used to mixing with high-ranking officials. Therefore, it would not have surprised anyone if he appeared before the sultan with a message from the late grand vizier.

All of this is also confirmed by the 48th distich of the *qasīda*, where its author announces that he has been in state service for over 30 years, working as a calligrapher and a panegyrist; and verses 49–50 once more confirm the statement in the foreword: the author wants to be worthy of his former status, lost by him due to the collapse of Malikshāh’s government.

There is, however, not one person with the *nisba* of Maghribī among the high-ranking Seljuq officials listed by ‘Abbās Iqbāl in his *Vazārat*. And it would look rather strange for a Seljuq official to be known as Maghribī (lit. ‘from the west’). So I would claim that the name of Muhammad Maghribī conceals the person of Muhammad Mu‘izzī Nīshābūrī (محمد معزی نیشابوری) – the most famous court poet of the Seljuq dynasty.

Most significantly, Mu‘izzī did not intend to hide his name under a false *nisba* in the afterword to the *Siyar al-mulūk*. There was a fateful coincidence that subsequently influenced all future study and understanding of this forged compilation. Just one lower dot was added by a medieval copyist in the manuscript that belonged to Charles Schefer and examined by me *de visu*, and Mu‘izzī (معزی) turned into Maghribī (مغربی) – that is, from a very well-known person to a person who is absolutely unidentified!

The fact that nearly one half of the *qasīda* is dedicated to the book (21 distichs of 54), in addition to his foreword and afterword, shows his direct participation in the writing of the *Siyar al-mulūk*. Essentially, he praises his own work. And even the absence of the *qasīda* in the majority of copies of the *Siyar al-mulūk* has absolutely no effect on the conclusion that the *qasīda* was written by him. Let us imagine that we had encountered the *qasīda* somewhere separate from the text of the book. We would immediately ask ourselves: What book by Nizām al-Mulk was under discussion, and who was the author of the *qasīda*?

The *qasīda* was not included in the *ḡivān* of Mu‘izzī edited by ‘Abbās Iqbāl, which surprises me, because, just one year apart, he first published the *ḡivān* by Mu‘izzī (in 1940) and then the *Siyar al-mulūk* (in 1941), and could easily have attributed it to the poet. But the fact that the *qasīda* was written by Mu‘izzī, and not by anybody else, may seem even more convincing if, besides the arguments given above, we compare its style with the style of the *qasīdas* included in his *ḡivān*:

- a) I have corrected two distichs (28 and 29) of the *qasīda* in the *Siyar al-mulūk* based on the text of another *qasīda* which was written by Mu‘izzī for a son of Nizām al-Mulk — Mu‘ayyid al-Mulk (killed 494 [1101]).<sup>32</sup>
- b) The expression ‘thirty years of service’ (خدمت سی ساله), used in the 48th distich of this *qasīda*, is encountered again in the 44th distich of the *qasīda* by Mu‘izzī dedicated to the Sanjar (see n. 9, above). It is not encountered among the works of any other Persian poets, as it applies to a fact from the personal biography of Mu‘izzī. To compare:

48. *This long-standing slave, calligrapher, and panegyris has the rights for thirty years of service and more.*

44. *Thirty years of service, after all, deserves a certain respect, thirty years of respect in service is not to be neglected.*



The prose text of the *Siyar al-mulūk* and the *qasīda* that goes with it add new facts to the biography of Mu‘izzī. From the 48th distich of the *qasīda*, we learn that, in addition to his position as panegyrist – or more exactly, Master of Poets – Mu‘izzī simultaneously held the position of calligrapher. From the foreword and afterword to the text in the primary Urūmiya version, it follows that he was also a scribe, but very far from an ordinary scribe. The ‘private books’ (کتابهای خاص), or, more precisely, the ‘writings’, mentioned in the afterword on behalf of Nizām al-Mulk, should be understood as the ‘private correspondence’ addressed directly to Malikshāh.<sup>33</sup> Besides, according to Nizāmī ‘Arūzī Samarqandī (lived in the sixth [twelfth] century), Mu‘izzī at one point was favoured with the status of *nadīm* (‘confidant’ and ‘drinking companion’) of Malikshāh, and thus entered the circle of the sultan’s intimate courtiers.<sup>34</sup> After the collapse of Malikshāh’s court and the beginning of internecine wars, Mu‘izzī had undoubtedly lost this status.

The status of *nadīm* appears to have been the safest one, since *nadīms* seem to have been the most informed persons at the Seljuq court, whose multiple intrigues often ended in a lethal outcome for some of their participants. Perhaps, due to the absence of definitive preferences in the verses composed by Mu‘izzī for the candidates to the Seljuq throne during internecine wars, he might initially have been deprived of the status under Sanjar. In fear for his life, he might have tried to gain it back under his brother, the Sultan Muhammad b. Malikshāh. This explains why he first composed the *qasīda* in praise of Sanjar, where he complains about respect lost to him, and then wrote the *qasīda* in praise of Muhammad b. Malikshāh, where in verses 49–50 he once more complains of his humiliated status using the same expression, ‘thirty years of service’.

### *The Date of the Qasīda’s Composition*

*Qasīdas* are known to have been written by medieval court poets, usually for some memorable occasion, in order to record it in history, as well as the events connected with it. In our case, the date of the *qasīda*’s composition may be named quite unambiguously. The 22nd distich, beginning the praise of the sultan, talks of his victory over a certain enemy; the 36th distich sketches the enemy in more detail, mentioning rebels and the danger from them – which was, however, eliminated by Muhammad b. Malikshāh; the 43rd distich talks of the soul of the enemy, which ‘will reside in Hell’; the 45th and 46th distichs inform us of the command of Muhammad b. Malikshāh, and of the confiscation of all the gold from the rebels.

The only historical event that fits the details given by the poet in this *qasīda* was the victory of Muhammad b. Malikshāh over the Ismā‘īlī fortress of Shāhdiz, and the capture and execution of the head of the Ismā‘īlīs in Iran. We may safely conclude that the *qasīda* was composed to celebrate this victory. Evidently, by this time – 500 (1107) – the final text of the *Siyar al-mulūk*, along

with the *qasīda*, had formed at last. Thus Mu‘izzī had 13 to 15 years at his disposal to embellish Nizām al-Mulk’s original contract of employment.

Apart from selfish reasons, there seems to be only one possible and less reprehensible motive for Mu‘izzī’s counterfeiting – that is, the possibility that he had been asked personally by Nizām al-Mulk to compile and then ‘improve’ the text on his behalf, as is the practice of modern speech-writers. But this claim seems unprovable. Since Mu‘izzī continued his service at Sanjar’s court, the text with the *qasīda* probably remained in the personal archive of the poet without ever being formally presented during the poet’s lifetime, and appeared on the medieval book market only after his death. We may be sure that Mu‘izzī did not send the *qasīda* alone to his addressee, because if he had submitted the *qasīda* then he would also have had to present the text of the *Siyar al-mulūk*, which is under discussion in the *qasīda* – and this event would have been recorded in the historical accounts of contemporaries. But there is no other known evidence, or even a hint of the existence, of the *Siyar al-mulūk* in the works of historians or contemporaries of the Seljuq period, apart from the solitary direct reference in the second part of the *Nasīhat al-mulūk*. This is the theme of the final section of this chapter.

## II. The Bipartite *Nasīhat al-mulūk* and Its Relation to the *Siyar al-mulūk*

### *Previous Textual Studies*

The second part of the *Nasīhat al-mulūk* (henceforth NM2) consists of seven chapters. Taken together, they are three times longer than the so-called ‘foreword’, or the first part (henceforth NM1), which was certainly written by al-Ghazālī. The *Nasīhat al-mulūk* was compiled after the *Siyar al-mulūk*. This is why its first publisher, Jalāl al-Dīn Humā’ī, suggested that al-Ghazālī used the *ta’līf* of Nizām al-Mulk for his own work. In other words, he borrowed 14 accounts from it and incorporated them into NM2, once even referring directly to the *Siyar al-mulūk*:

*Throughout the Nasīhat al-mulūk, which consists of two parts – the foreword and seven chapters – 16 stories, precepts and counsels are taken from the Siyar al-mulūk. Two of them are in the first part, and the rest of them are in the second one. Especially those given in the second part are quite obviously and clearly taken directly from the Siyar al-mulūk, since in many places the phrasing of the two books is identical, coinciding word-for-word.*<sup>35</sup>

Humā’ī’s viewpoint on the correlation between the two texts remains the predominant one today for scholars who prefer to consider NM2 as an authentic contribution by al-Ghazālī.

In my opinion, it is impossible to imagine the Argument of Islām (Hujjat al-Islām) – a *mujtahid* of respectable age, already known in all the corners of the Islamic world – copying excerpts from the compilation of the Grand Vizier, even if this eminent state figure was his fellow countryman or friend. Applied to the situation today, it would mean that a religious figure of high rank (cardinal, archbishop or imām), already advanced in years and working on a religious treatise, had copied something from a report by the prime minister of his country. This seems quite ridiculous to me. It seems most probable that both the *Siyar al-mulūk* and NM2 were compiled by the same person. Until now, such a possibility has not even been considered.

Besides Humā'ī, the problem of the authenticity of NM2 was also discussed in detail by Patricia Crone in her article published 25 years ago, and recently by Nasrullāh Pourjavādy.<sup>36</sup> Their final conclusions were based mainly on scrupulous textual analysis of NM2 in comparison with NM1 and other authentic works by al-Ghazālī. Taking into account their conclusions as well as the findings of the first section of this chapter, the present research aims to give a few additional arguments in support of their point of view, mostly in terms of the historical factors that led to the compilation of NM1 and the addition to it of NM2. To this end, one should look more closely at the historical circumstances and date of composition of the *Nasīhat al-mulūk*.

### *Historical Context*

The historical circumstances related to the writing of the *Nasīhat al-mulūk* are reflected in the first three of the letters addressed by al-Ghazālī to state and religious figures of his time. The letters were collected by a medieval compiler – evidently a descendant of the imām – into a volume published by 'Abbās Iqbāl. He supposed that the volume was compiled 'not long after al-Ghazālī's lifetime'.<sup>37</sup> However, judging from a citation taken by the compiler from *al-Lāmiyya* – the famous *qasīda* by Ibn al-Vardī (d. 749 [1349])<sup>38</sup> – this took place more than two centuries after al-Ghazālī's death. The late date is indirectly confirmed by the compiler, to whom the *Nasīhat al-mulūk* was already known under this title as a work in its own right.

The three letters present a brief chronology of the events of 503 (1109) – one-and-a-half years before al-Ghazālī's death, after he stopped working at the Nīshābūr Nizāmiyya, asking to resign. Accompanied by the compiler's comments on them, the letters do furnish several important details: the date when the *Nasīhat* was written, the reason for its composition, its addressee, and the location where the text may have been edited.

The first letter is al-Ghazālī's letter of excuse in which he explained why he could not visit Sanjar, in order to clarify the situation relating to his 30-year-old notebook, entitled *al-Mankhūl min ta'līq al-usūl*. This notebook was forged by his ill-wishers, and he himself was accused of dishonouring the Sunnites in general and the Hanafites in particular. However, Sanjar sent a messenger

ordering al-Ghazālī to come to the headquarters located in the settlement of Turugh, near modern Mashhad. Al-Ghazālī did so, and made a speech at the reception. Sanjar asked him to write the speech down in his own handwriting and give it to him. Thus, another letter to Sanjar appeared which is essentially a record by al-Ghazālī of his speech at the reception.

Upon receiving the text of the speech, Sanjar sent the author some game which he had hunted and killed himself as a sign of his attention and favour. Al-Ghazālī appreciated this attention, and compiled the *Nasīhat al-mulūk* in reply. At the end of the text, he gave a brief explanation on the chronology of events connected with *al-Mankhūl min ta'līq al-usūl*. In this explanation, he informed Sanjar also how his ill-wishers had first tried to falsify his autobiographical *al-Munqiz min al-zalāl* and the *Mishkāt al-anvār*, and then to gain his written permission on the backs of these two works to make authorized copies (*asl*) of them with his help. This 'explanatory note' or 'covering letter' attached to the *Nasīhat* can be considered as the third letter by al-Ghazālī to Sanjar.

Just as the *qasīda* in the *Siyar al-mulūk* slipped from researchers' field of vision, the letter has never been associated or published with the *Nasīhat al-mulūk* as the author's supplement to it. But the letter does appear to belong with the *Nasīhat*, and to indicate that the *Nasīhat* was part of official correspondence, and could not have been voluminous before beginning its independent life. Since the letter also shows that counterfeiting a book during the Seljuq era was not an unusual practice, it deserves to be cited here.

*It happened that in 499 [1106] the writer of these words, al-Ghazālī, after he had spent twelve years in seclusion ... in his cell, undertook to go to Nīsābūr and to occupy himself in diffusing knowledge and propagating the Sharī'at, since languor and exhaustion had penetrated into the matter of knowledge. Then the hearts of the venerable ones among the lords of the hearts and the people of inner vision [epithets for those with special spiritual qualities] came to his aid: exhortations came in dreams and wakefulness that such a motion would be the starting-point for acts of charity and the reason for knowledge and the Sharī'at to revive.<sup>39</sup>*

*After consent was given and teaching became lively, and knowledge-seekers began converging from all over the world, envious people arose out of envy. They could find no acceptable invective other than to make a falsification (talbīs). They changed several phrases in the book al-Munqiz min al-zalāl and the book Mishkāt al-anvār, introducing phrases of unbelief, and sent them to me so that I wrote my permission on the backs of the books. The Worshipped Most Glorious and High, by His mercy and generosity, inspired me to study them and realize their falsification.*

*Then this incident became known to the head of Khurāsān. He arrested the forger (muzavvir) and finally sent him away from Nīsābūr. Then the forger went to the headquarters of the Malik of Islām and loosened his*

*tongue of invective, but was exhausted by this. Then he took a notebook that I had [compiled] in my childhood, on the back of which I had written al-Mankhūl min ta'līq al-usūl. Thirty years before this, some people out of envy had already added to it several phrases of invective against the Imām Abū Hanīfa.*

*Then some religious people uttered compliments concerning me, explaining the situation to the Malik of Islām and exaggerating it so much that the Malik of Islām said: 'We wish to see him, listen to him and be blessed by his prayer.' Then, as he directed, we immediately went to the shrine [of Imām Rizā, i.e. the city of Mashhad]. Then the Malik of Islām sent the supreme judge Mahmūd to the shrine, who being one of the elites of the Hazrat and a state counsellor, was in fact a bilateral assistant [i.e. assisting both the Hanafites and the Shafi'ites] nominally and substantially, with the message of a desire to meet. Then we had to go to the headquarters of Turūgh, to the throne of Malik, and pray for him. Then there was an order to confirm with our own handwriting what had happened. In compliance with the order, what had happened in fact was confirmed.<sup>40</sup>*

Thus, the place of action and the circumstances that prompted al-Ghazālī to write these letters, and also their contents, certainly show that the *Nasīhat* was written by the author in gratitude for the hunting trophy sent to him by Sanjar. And the addressee of the text was Sanjar, and not his brother Muhammad b. Malikshāh.

### *The Size of the Text*

The historical circumstances also provide evidence that the genuine *Nasīhat al-mulūk* should have been short enough to be compiled without any considerable delay upon receipt of Sanjar's hunting trophy – say, between two and five days. This goal could have been reached only by means of compilation of the materials taken from the books already written by al-Ghazālī, without carrying out any further research, which would have taken considerable time. NM2 accounts for three-quarters of the combined text, and its contents consist of materials taken from a variety of sources, most of which had never been used by al-Ghazālī before.

The bipartite *Nasīhat al-mulūk* resembles a book in its full sense, though without a traditional foreword. All of the reasons given above for its absence, therefore, can also be applied to this case. I doubt that al-Ghazālī even gave a title to his short epistle to Sanjar. Most probably, it was titled later, since its title, usually translated as 'The Counsel for Kings', can also be understood as 'The Counsel of Kings'. The latter interpretation exactly corresponds with the contents of NM2.

There is further indirect evidence that throws more light on the size of the text and the identity of its addressee. In NM1, al-Ghazālī used an expression

that under other circumstances would be self-evident and unremarkable. He wrote:

*When the sun rises, tell someone to read this kitāb to you and to read it again every Friday until it stays in your memory.*<sup>41</sup>

چون آفتاب بر آید، کسی را بگوی تا این کتاب بر تو خواند، و هر آدینه باز خوانند تا بر یاد بماند.

Of course, there is nothing unusual in the private correspondence received by medieval sultans being read to them by third parties. But by Sanjar's own admission, in a letter published by 'Abbās Iqbāl, he was absolutely illiterate – he could neither read nor write: a fact which everyone knew about.<sup>42</sup> Hence, it would be disrespectful on al-Ghazālī's part to recommend Sanjar to remember the text by heart, when it was increased by three-quarters due to NM2, and with the endless stream of names that appear in it. The second part is clearly not suitable for memorizing.

### *Procedures for Official Correspondence*

The fact that the addressee of the *Nasīhat al-mulūk* was one of the highest officials of the Seljuq state determined the subsequent destiny of the work. As we have seen, each Seljuq ruler had a private depository where the correspondence addressed directly to him was copied and collected. As a private epistle, therefore, the *Nasīhat* should certainly have passed through the usual bureaucratic procedure, coming under the responsibility of a scribe of Sanjar's private correspondence, who should then have copied the text for the depository. After al-Ghazālī's death, the text might have been augmented with NM2 at the same place.

### *Textual Analysis*

The only substantial argument in favour of NM2 having been written by al-Ghazālī, which Humā'ī gives in his textual analysis, is the mention of the bipartite *Nasīhat* in the works of medieval literary critics, written almost a century after al-Ghazālī's death – together with the appearance of its Arabic translation under the title *al-Tibr al-masbūk fī-Nasīhat al-mulūk* as early as the second half of the sixth (twelfth) century. At the same time, Humā'ī provides us with 11 arguments against al-Ghazālī's authorship of NM2. All these arguments have been scrutinized and confirmed by Crone, and were recently discussed by Pourjavādy. In addition to that, Crone has examined the discrepancies between the two parts in terms of the religious and ideological backgrounds of their authors.

I can add to these arguments that, at the beginning of the *usūl* of the *Kāmiyā-yi sa'ādat* and the *kitābs* of the *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, al-Ghazālī always mentions the headings of the chapters and their numbers, while in NM2 the author does not say a single word about the seven following chapters.

Besides, if NM1 consists almost entirely of excerpts from the *Kīmiyā* and the *Ihyā'*, then why in the seven chapters of NM2 does the author resort to other sources? Here it should be noted that, in his later years, al-Ghazālī did not take information from new sources. On the contrary, for each subsequent book he used the works already written by him, each time arranging the material differently depending on the topic to be discussed, while Humā'ī in his research singles out at least 11 works that were not written by the imām, but were used by the unknown author to compile NM2.

As the textual analysis of the content of HM1 shows, al-Ghazālī's concept was rather simple. For his illiterate addressee, he used an image of the Quranic tree and revealed it from a religious point of view: 'Hast thou not seen how God has struck a similitude? A good word is as a good tree – its roots are firm, and its branches are in Heaven' [Q 14: 24]. The 'good word' (*kalima tayyiba*) in the verse is commonly understood as a formula of the Islamic creed (*al-shahāda*). To fully reveal the image, al-Ghazālī took recourse to the works composed by him before. The main of them was his *Kīmiyā-yi sa'ādat*.

| Sources of NM1                                                                       | <i>The Kīmiyā-yi sa'ādat</i>                                             | <i>The Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn</i>                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Contents of NM1</b>                                                               |                                                                          |                                                           |
| The Foreword                                                                         | —                                                                        | —                                                         |
| On the Principles of the Creed, which are the Roots of Faith<br>Ten principles-roots | The 1st Chapter ('Attaining Orthodox belief') of the 1st Pillar          | —                                                         |
| The Branches of the Tree of Faith<br>Ten branches                                    | The 10th Chapter ('On Having the Subjects and Ruling') of the 2nd Pillar | —                                                         |
| The Springs which water the Tree of Faith                                            | The beginning of the 10th Chapter of the 2nd Pillar                      | —                                                         |
| The First Spring<br>Ten examples                                                     | The 3rd Topic: 'On the Spiritual Knowledge of This World'                | The 6th and 7th books of the third volume ( <i>rub</i> ') |
| The Second Spring<br>Five anecdotes                                                  | The 10th Chapter ('On the Remembrance of Death') of the 4th Pillar       | The 7th book of the third volume ( <i>rub</i> ')          |
|                                                                                      |                                                                          | The 10th book of the fourth volume ( <i>rub</i> ')        |

Despite the obvious time limit, he has shaped this simple image completely and has made it comprehensible to anyone, with no need to add anything to it, especially in the form of the seven following chapters of NM2.

Furthermore, it seems incredible that a Shafī'ite imām, and especially al-Ghazālī, would acquit a counterfeiter of falsifying a letter, as is done by the author of NM2 in its fourth chapter. The chapter relates how an educated person from Iraq became bankrupt and decided to solve his financial problems

by counterfeiting a letter from Yahya b. Khālīd al-Barmakī to ‘Abd Allāh b. Mālīk al-Khuzā‘ī, a favourite of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd.<sup>43</sup>

### *A Portrait of the Author of NM2*

The above evidence provides us with the following traits of the author of NM2. Some of these have already been identified by Crone. To sum up: a) in terms of age – ‘a younger contemporary of al-Ghazālī’; b) in terms of professional background – ‘not an *‘alim* at all, still less a thinker; not a religious scholar’; c) in terms of national identity – ‘an Iranian, more precisely an Iranian nationalist’; d) in terms of confessional priorities – Zoroastrian; e) in terms of formal religious status – ‘a Sunni, possibly a Hanafī’; f) in terms of occupation – ‘presumably a secretary’ (*dabīr*).<sup>44</sup>

One can add a few features to his social status as demonstrated explicitly by the text of NM2: g) he was an educated Iranian who, at least, liked Persian and Arabic poetry, and perhaps also wrote verses himself; h) he memorized a not inconsiderable number of short Arabic expressions taken from the Qur’ān and traditions (*ahādīs*) in order to illustrate his speech; i) his use of the forms of address (‘O Sultan of Islam’, ‘you’, ‘O brother’) can be treated as an indication of an informal relationship between the addresser and his addressee. The latter was undoubtedly a Seljuq ruler of high rank, since the former praises this dynasty as the current one.

This portrait provides us with sufficient reason to consider the author of NM2 as a *nadīm*, since the same characteristics were described by Kaykāvūs b. Iskandar (lived in the fifth [eleventh] century) in his *Qābūs-nāma* in stating the qualities necessary in a *nadīm*. Among other things, such a person must be well acquainted with secretarial duties (*dabīrī*); and even if he is not a poet, he must be proficient in Arabic and Persian poetry and able to cite a verse at the appropriate moment; he must have memorized many stories and tales; he must know how to play backgammon and chess; he must know the Qur’an, its formal exegesis, some Islamic law and Muslim tradition in order to answer a ruler’s question when necessary; he must have read a great deal about the deeds of the kings (*siyar-i mulūk*).<sup>45</sup>

Hence, the views reflected in the mosaic pattern of NM2 are not al-Ghazālī’s own, but those of the *nadīm*, who has transformed the imām from a strict Shafī‘ite into a religious liberal. According to Nizāmī ‘Arūzī Samarqandī, ‘all Seljuq kin were fond of poetry’ (ال سلجوق همه شعر دوست بودند), and some of them preferred to have only poets as *nadīms*.<sup>46</sup> As demonstrated above in relation to the *Siyar al-mulūk*, Master of Poets Muhammad Mu‘izzī had undoubtedly lost his status of *nadīm* due to the collapse of Malikshāh’s court. Then he composed two *qasīdas* in praise of Sanjar and Muhammad b. Malikshāh, where he twice complained about respect lost to him. He even fabricated the *Siyar al-mulūk* and ascribed it to Nizām al-Mulūk in order to



recover his job, and thus return to his lost positions and status. Obviously, he succeeded in regaining all of these at Sanjar's court.

It is noteworthy that al-Ghazālī's ill-wishers were accused by the compiler of his letters of misleading a 'certain Maghribī', inciting him to spread negative inventions about al-Ghazālī among the state figures at Sanjar's court.<sup>47</sup> Since the compiler wrote it more than two centuries after al-Ghazālī's death, he (or a source he used) could have turned Mu'izzī into Maghribī. As the ill-wishers relied on this person, he certainly belonged to Sanjar's close circle.

### *The Reason for the Compilation of NM2 and Its Addition to NM1*

Humā'ī's critical edition of the Persian text of the *Nasīhat al-mulūk* is based on seven manuscripts, three of which contain only NM1. The Arabic translation of the work, which was also included by Humā'ī in his publication, does not contain NM2 either. The separate existence of NM1 under its own title in some of the preserved Persian manuscripts and under different titles in the Arabic translation – along with the text of NM2 in Arabic under another title as a work of its own, and the bipartite *Nasīhat al-mulūk* with its Arabic translation of *al-Tibr al-masbūk fī-Nasīhat al-mulūk* – has already been described by Crone, and recently discussed by Pourjavādy. It led them both to the conclusion that NM2, an originally Persian compilation by an unknown author, was added to NM1 in the second half of the sixth (twelfth) century. Pourjavādy seems inclined to suppose that it was *coincidentally* made by an early medieval scribe, since 'similar complements made by scribes are also seen in the writings of other authors'.<sup>48</sup> On the contrary, Crone asserts that NM2, as a 'practical complement', was *intentionally* added by a medieval forger to NM1, and attributed to al-Ghazālī shortly after his death.<sup>49</sup> As it seems hardly possible that al-Ghazālī's name was used coincidentally – and unintentionally – her assertion is more convincing, though she does not explain what the word 'practical' implies in the case in question.

It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that the writing of NM2 was preceded by a certain historical event that prompted the author of NM2 to compile it, and that might be reflected in it. Its contents give a general impression that the addressee of NM2 faced a problem, and that NM2 was intended to help him solve the problem. Its first chapter is mostly devoted to arguing that the behaviour of the former Zoroastrian rulers be taken as a model to follow. The second chapter distinguishes between worthy and unworthy viziers, and identifies the kin of Nizām al-Mulk as the worthiest of all, to be preferred for the moment.<sup>50</sup> The very short third chapter, which concerns secretaries (*dabīrān*) and their art, is obviously aimed at implicitly praising the author himself and his skill, by demonstrating the breadth of his knowledge and how worthy he is. The next chapter, filled with a variety of stories, describes the meanings of *himmat* – understood by the author as generosity, lavishness, and the leniency of rulers and viziers towards their subjects (contrary to its

understanding by al-Ghazālī). Remarkably, it enjoins any ruler without these qualities to take lessons from his viziers and *nadīms*. The fifth chapter presents quite a long list of sayings and maxims related to wisdom. Unlike other chapters containing brief authorial remarks and explanations, this one seems to include none of the author's own words. The sixth chapter deals with the subject of intelligence, which was of great value for Sasanians and other rulers in making decisions. Finally, the seventh chapter is wholly dedicated to women. It has a remarkable concluding section that sets out the author's recommendations on choosing a wife and giving a daughter in marriage.

The author of NM2 thus offers the following advice: rule as the just Zoroastrian rulers did; prefer Nizām al-Mulk's kin when appointing viziers; appreciate this author; be lavish in rewarding your servants (first of all, this author); be a wise ruler; make decisions using your own mind and intelligence; act contrary to women's advice; and 'take precautions in choosing a wife and giving a daughter in marriage, especially a grown-up daughter, and so avoid falling into disgrace and embarrassment'.<sup>51</sup>

Two events in the later period of Seljuq history seem to correspond with the allusions made by the author of NM2. In 518 (1124), Sanjar gave his daughter Māh-i Mulk-Khātūn in marriage to his nephew Mahmūd, a son of his late brother Ghiyās al-Dīn Muhammad, and issued a document appointing Mahmūd as a successor to the throne. This was done at the insistence of Tāj al-Dīn-Khātūn, Sanjar's mother and Mahmūd's grandmother. A year earlier, Mahmūd had executed his prime minister Shams al-Mulk (Rabi' al-awwal 517 [May 1123]), the fifth son of Nizām al-Mulk, by order of his powerful uncle, and left himself without a prime minister for a year.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, the story of Malikshāh, Turkān-Khātūn with her young son, and the murder of Nizām al-Mulk (committed due to the direct participation of his fierce rival Tāj al-Mulk, who, as we have seen, was the ally of one of the leading Ismā'īlīs in Iran, Hasan b. al-Sabbāh) repeated itself, albeit with some variations of detail. It would not be surprising, therefore, to encounter one more state figure who provoked all these actions and put some of them into effect. He is stated by many historians to have been the most treacherous, villainous and greedy vizier throughout the whole of Seljuq history. His name was Qavām al-Dīn Abū'l-Qāsim Dargazīnī (executed in 527 [1133]). It was he who arranged a conspiracy to discredit Shams al-Mulk in the eyes of Mahmūd and Sanjar, so as to overthrow him and later occupy his position. It was he who, several years before 518 (1124), was sent by Mahmūd to Sanjar's headquarters as an official representative or ambassador, with the sole purpose of ensuring Mahmūd's and, of course, his own future. As stated by the late Jalāl al-Dīn Muhaddis Urmavī, the editor of the *Ba'zī masālib al-navāsib*, 'to overthrow their inner rivals, some of the Seljuq sultans, viziers and emirs used to involve the Ismā'īlīs and ask for their assistance'.<sup>53</sup> His statement fits both Tāj al-Mulk and Abū'l-Qāsim Dargazīnī. The latter had a reputation for advancing his personal interests by

inducing others to do his dirty work, and many of his potential rivals did not take the risk of standing in his way.

In fear for his life, it is possible that the author of NM2 added his text to NM1, concealing his authorship because the practical advice given in NM2 contradicted Dargazīnī's intentions. This would explain why he left his text without a formal foreword. On the other hand, Crone is absolutely right in saying that the author of NM2 'makes no attempt to impersonate al-Ghazālī by writing in his style'.<sup>54</sup> In my opinion, this discrepancy was clearly intended to show that there was no relation between the two works except the common addressee, and to distinguish NM2 from NM1 by the inclusion of some practical advice under the circumstances outlined above.

### *Conclusions*

To counterfeit a book during the Seljuq era, when the battle between the Seljuqs and the Ismā'īlīs was being waged with varied success on all fronts, was not an unusual practice. Nor was it unusual to drag a prominent scholar or statesman into the political bickering against his will, both during his lifetime and – by editing his works and notes on them with selfish, ideological, and other partial motives – after his death. Therefore, the prose text of the *Siyar al-mulūk* fabricated by Mu'izzī, as well as his *qasīda* that goes with it, not only add new facts to his biography and work, but also give us the evidence required to consider him in the context of his times. In this case, one can be confident in the attribution of the fabrication to Mu'izzī. The case of the second part of the *Nasīhat al-mulūk* is less clear cut, but here too one can discern the hand of Mu'izzī. The principal reason for assuming that NM2 too is the work of Mu'izzī is its relation to the *Siyar al-mulūk*, since Mu'izzī seems to have been the only one who had the *Siyar al-mulūk* at his disposal, and who could thus borrow from it and even refer to it directly in NM2. All of these facts can also be used in evidence against him, to unmask him as a counterfeiter. Nevertheless, these facts remain, in my opinion, insufficient to identify the counterfeiter with certainty. If NM2 was written and added to NM1 by Mu'izzī, then he must have compiled it between 517 and 518 (1123 and 1124), not long before his death, when he was around 80 years old. If so, then the counterfeiting was committed by him no more than 15 years after the date when NM1 was submitted by al-Ghazālī to Sanjar, and the compiled text was translated into Arabic after the death of Mu'izzī. On the other hand, the circumstances reflected in al-Ghazālī's letters with regard to the attempts at counterfeiting some of his texts finally led also to the composition of the first part of the *Nasīhat al-mulūk* – and presumably also made al-Ghazālī, or more likely his students, prepare a copy from his authentic work, so that today we have two versions of the text.

## Notes:

1. This section is a substantial development of the main ideas published in my earlier article on this topic: Alexey Khismatulin, 'To Forge a Book in the Medieval Ages: Nezām al-Molk's *Siyar al-Muluk* (*Siyāsāt-Nāma*)' *Journal of Persianate Studies* 1 (2008), pp. 30–66.
2. See the bibliographical data for the editions of C. Schefer, B. Zakhoder, H. Darke and J. Shi'ār below, in the notes.
3. C. Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3 vols (London, 1879–83), II, p. 446.
4. On Jamāl al-Dīn Ilfaqshat/Ilqafshat b. Qaymāz see 'Abd al-Jalīl Qazvīnī Rāzī, *Naqz* (*Ba'zī masālib al-nawāsib*), ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Muhaddis Urmavī (Tehran, 1358 [1979]), p. 425 (fn. 2 by Urmavī); and Edward G. Browne, 'Account of a rare, if not unique, manuscript History of the Seljuqs in the Schefer Collection lately acquired by the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris', *JRAS* 14: 3, (1902), pp. 567–610, and 14: 4, (1902), pp. 849–87 (see in particular pp. 870–1). At around 564 (1168), there seems to have been no other Amīr Hājib with the honorific title Jamāl al-Dīn.
5. Nizām al-Mulk, Abū 'Alī Hasan b. 'Alī Tūsī, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyāsāt-nāma or Siyar al-mulūk of Nizām al-Mulk*, transl. from the Persian by H. Darke (London, 1978, 2nd edn), p. xii.
6. See, for example, Marta Simidchieva, 'Siāsāt-nāme Revisited: The Question of Authenticity', in *Proceedings of the Second European Conference on Iranian Studies*, ed. Bert G. Fragner et al. (Rome, 1995), pp. 657–74; and 'Kingship and Legitimacy in Nizām al-Mulk's *Siyāsāt-nāma*, Fifth/Eleventh Century', in B. Gründler and L. Marlow, eds, *Writers and Rulers: Perspectives on Their Relationship from Abbasid to Safavid Times* (Wiesbaden, 2004), pp. 97–131.
7. Qazvīnī Rāzī, *Naqz* (*Ba'zī masālib al-nawāsib*), p. 119.
8. Abū'l-Hasan Shahvārī, 'Ravābit-i Seljuqiyan va 'Abbāsiyan (Malikshāh va al-Muqtadī)' in *Pazhūhish-nāma-yi tārikh*, 3:14 (1388 [2010]), pp. 57–78.
9. Mu'izzī, *Divān-i Amīr al-shu'arā-yi Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Malik-i Nīshābūrī mutakhallis ba Mu'izzī*, ed. 'Abbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī (Tehran, 1319 [1940]), p. 715. The verse corresponds to number 16,412 in 'Abbās Iqbāl's numeration.
10. 'Abbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī, *Vazārat dar 'ahd-i salātīn-i buzurg-i Seljuqī az tārikh-i tashkīl-i īn silsila tā marg-i sultān-i Sanjar (432–552)*, ed. Muhammad Taqī Dānish-Pazhūh va Yahyā Dhukā' (Tehran, 1338 [1959]), pp. 158–9.
11. For more details, see A. Khismatulin, 'Vidy musul'manskoi nauchnoi literatury v X–XV vekakh: sochineniya (*tasnīf*) i kompilyatsii (*ta'līf*)' ('The Forms of Islamic Scholarly Literature in the 10th–15th Centuries: Compositions (*tasnīf*) and Compilations (*ta'līf*'), in *Rahmat-nama* (St Petersburg, 2008), pp. 410–43.
12. *Siasset nameh. Traité de gouvernement composé pour le sultan Seldjoukide Melik-chah par le vizir Nizam oul-Moulk*, texte persan et traduction française, ed. Charles Schefer (Paris, 1891, 1893), I, pp. 1–2.
13. Abū 'Alī Hasan b. 'Alī Tūsī Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk* (*Siyāsāt-nāma*), ed. H. Darke (Tehran, 1340 [1962]), pp. 4–5.
14. Abū 'Alī Hasan b. 'Alī Tūsī Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyāsāt-nāma* (*Siyar al-mulūk*), ed. Ja'far Shi'ār (Tehran, 1385 [2006], 13th edn), p. 2.
15. Schefer, *Siasset nameh*, I, pp. 210–11; Darke, *Siyar al-mulūk*, p. 307.
16. Shi'ār, *Siyāsāt-nāma* (*Siyar al-mulūk*), p. 5, fn. 1.
17. Zakhoder's translation is approximately the same.

18. Darke, *Siyar al-mulūk*, p. 4. Abū 'Alī Hasan b. 'Alī Tūsī Nizām al-Mulūk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyāsat-nāma or Siyar al-mulūk of Nizām al-Mulūk*, transl. from the Persian by H. Darke (London, 1960), p. 2. *Siaset-name. Kniga o pravlēnii wazira XI stoletiya Nizam al-mulka*, transl. from the Persian, with introduction and commentary by B. N. Zakhoder (Moscow/Leningrad, 1949), p. 8.
19. Al-Ghazālī, *Makātīb-i fārsī-yi Ghazālī ba nām-i Fazā'il al-anām min rasā'il Hujjat al-Islām*, ed. 'Abbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī (Tehran, 1363 [1984], 2nd edn), pp. 10, 11 (corresponding to the citations).
20. Muntajab al-Dīn Juvaynī, *Āṭabat al-kataba*, ed. 'Abbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī (Tehran, 1329 [1950]).
21. Muhammad b. Husayn Bayhaqī, Abū'l-Fazl, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī*, ed. Khalīl Khatīb Rahbar, 3 vols (Tehran, 1386 [2007]), III, p. 987.
22. Darke, *The Book of Government* (London, 1978, 2nd edn), p. 74.
23. Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī*, III, p. 987.
24. See, for example, 'Alī Abū'l-Hasanī, 'Mundarajāt-i "zidd-i shi'ayī"-yi Siyāsat-nāma az ān-i khwāja-yi Nizām al-Mulūk nīst', *Falsafa, kalām va 'irfān*, 29–31 (1378 [1999]), pp. 150–9, 128–47, 140–60, respectively.
25. This verse repeats in the same words the text in the afterword given on behalf of Nizām al-Mulūk: 'For from reading this book, boredom will not overcome [the reader]'.
26. A play on the literal meaning of the sultan's title: Ghiyās-i Dīn means the 'succour of religion', so the whole phrase literally means, 'Sultan Succour-of-the-Religion-of Muhammad; that Muhammad to whom God gave the throne to triumph over the enemies of religion'.
27. Grandfather, i.e. Ālp-Arslān; father, i.e. Malikshāh.
28. In this *bayt* I have slightly corrected the text as given by Schefer, according to the text I will discuss below:  
 first line: گر چه ز سعد هست بسی بعد تا ثری ← گر چه ز چرخ هست بسی بعد تا ثری  
 second line: ورچه ز بحر هست بسر فرق تا شمر ← ورچه ز بحر هست بسی فرق تا شمر.  
 Schefer declined to translate this and the subsequent *bayt*: 'Je n'ai pas pu trouver un sens raisonnable aux quatre vers dont j'ai omis de donner ici la traduction' (see Schefer, *Siaset nameh*, II, p. 310).
29. The same goes for this *bayt*:  
 first line: اندر به جنب دولت او تیری سیاس ← آنرا به جنب دولت او چون ثری شناس  
 second line: وین را به جنب همت او چون سمر سمر ← وین را به جنب همت او چون شمر شمر شمر.
30. That is, a necklace where the central place is occupied by a large jewel or a pearl.
31. Here there is a very important reference to the death of an enemy of Muhammad b. Malikshāh. This reference makes it possible to give a precise date for the composition of the *qasīda* with greater confidence, as well as for the completion of compilation of the entire text of the *Siyar al-mulūk*.
32. Mu'izzī, *Dīvān*, p. 252. The numeration of the verses corresponds to 6093–4 in 'Abbās Iqbāl's numeration.
33. This translation of the word *khāss* (خاص) is confirmed by the Seljuq official correspondence which has already been published by many scholars. See, for example, Heribert Horst, *Die Staatsverwaltung der Grosselguen und Horazmshāhs (1038–1231)* (Wiesbaden, 1964), pp. 19–24.
34. 'Umar b. 'Alī Ahmad b. Nizāmī 'Arūzī Samarqandī, *Chahār maqāla*, ed. M. Mu'in (Tehran, 1382 [2003], 12th edn), pp. 71–2.
35. Al-Ghazālī, *Nasīhat al-mulūk*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Humā'ī (Tehran, 1361 [1982]), p. 93 (of the foreword by Humā'ī).

36. Patricia Crone, 'Did al-Ghazālī Write a Mirror for Princes? On the Authorship of *Nasīhat al-mulūk*', *JSAL* 10 (1987), pp. 167–91; Nasrullāh Pourjavādy, *Dū mujaddid: pazhūhishhā'i dar bāra-yi Muhammad-i Ghazālī va Fakhr-i Rāzī* (Tehran, 1381 [2002]), pp. 413–24.
37. Al-Ghazālī, *Fazā'il*, p. 3 (of the foreword by 'Abbās Iqbāl).
38. Al-Ghazālī, *Fazā'il*, p. 3 (of the main text). The citation reads: *من يسمع يخل*; the full version is: *أين عاد أين فرعون ومن رفع الأهرام من يسمع يخل*.
39. The situation surrounding the departure for Nishābūr on the insistence of vizier Fakhr al-Mulk is described by al-Ghazālī in almost the same language in his *al-Munqiz min al-zalāl*. See al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqiz min al-zalāl*, ed. Jamīl Salibā and Kāmil 'Ayyād (Beirut, 1967, 7th edn), p. 121–2.
40. Al-Ghazālī, *Fazā'il*, pp. 11–12.
41. Al-Ghazālī, *Nasīhat*, p. 4. Cf. *Ghazālī's Book of Counsel for Kings* (*Nasīhat al-mulūk*), transl. F. R. C. Bagley (Oxford, 1964), p. 5.
42. 'Abbās Iqbāl, *Vazārat*, p. 316.
43. Al-Ghazālī, *Nasīhat*, pp. 211–15 (Chapter 4).
44. Crone, 'Did al-Ghazālī Write a Mirror for Princes?', pp. 178, 180, 187, 189, respectively.
45. Kaykāvūs b. Iskandar b. Qābūs b. Vashmgīr, *Qābūs-nāma*, ed. Ghulām-Husayn Yūsufī (Tehran, 1385 [2006], 14th edn), pp. 203–4.
46. Nizāmī 'Arūzī, *Chahār maqāla*, pp. 71–2.
47. Al-Ghazālī, *Fazā'il*, p. 3. The word combination looks rather strange (يكي را از مغاربه). In the initial version, this could have been written and understood as (مغربي را). Otherwise, we have to admit that those who entered Sanjar's service from the western territories of the Seljuq Empire with its capital in Isfāhan could bear the *nisba* of Maghribī.
48. Pourjavādy, *Dū mujaddid*, p. 415.
49. Crone, 'Did al-Ghazālī Write a Mirror for Princes?' pp. 190–1.
50. Al-Ghazālī, *Nasīhat*, p. 184; cf. Bagley, *Ghazālī's Book of Counsel for Kings*, p. 111.
51. Al-Ghazālī, *Nasīhat*, p. 285; cf. Bagley, *Ghazālī's Book of Counsel for Kings*, p. 172.
52. 'Abbās Iqbāl, *Vazārat*, pp. 187, 266–8.
53. Jalāl al-Dīn Muhaddis Urmavī, *Ta'liqāt-i Naqz*, 2 vols (Tehran, 1358 [1979]), I, p. 285.
54. Crone, 'Did al-Ghazālī Write a Mirror for Princes?', p. 190.

# Stylistic Continuities in Classical Persian Poetry: Reflections on Manuchehri from Dāmghān and Amir Mo‘ezzi

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The stylistic developments in classical Persian poetry between the tenth and sixteenth centuries are commonly classified on the basis of poetic styles and the literary activity in courtly centres over a wide geographical area, although ideologies and political factors also played an important part in this development. The tripartite classification based on stylistic criteria is as follows:

- a) *Sabk-e Khorāsāni* or ‘the style of Khorāsān’, an ‘inimitably simple’ style running from the dawn of Persian poetry to the middle of the twelfth century in the eastern parts of Persia.<sup>1</sup> The salient features of this style are the harmonious use of imagery, which is usually limited to one couplet (*morā’āt nazir*), and infrequent borrowing from the Arabic language.
- b) *Sabk-e ‘erāqi* or ‘the style of ‘Erāq’, indicating the shift of literary activities from the eastern parts of medieval Persian territories to the west during the second period, from the middle of the twelfth century to the sixteenth century. During this period, the imagery and metaphors become sophisticated, and there is an increasing use of extended metaphors, sometimes running over several couplets. Learned allusions and the infusion of mystical themes made the poetry convoluted and interpretable at various levels.
- c) The third period is called *sabk-e hendi* (‘the Indian style’), extending from the beginning of the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century in Persia, but still maintained in other areas such as Afghanistan, central Asia and India. Poets of this period deviate from the harmonious use of imagery, use allegory, and dwell on mystical and philosophical themes.<sup>2</sup>

This tripartite division of Persian poetry based on style appeared in Persian literary criticism in the nineteenth century, in literary circles in Khorāsān, to which the poet Sabuhi, the father of Malek al-Sho‘arā Mohammad-Taqi Bahār,

belonged.<sup>3</sup> As J. T. P. de Bruijn has indicated, 'it is impossible to determine the chronological boundaries between the three periods with any precision. Only the end of the period of the Indian style can be dated approximately, and then only as far as Persia itself is concerned.'<sup>4</sup> This essay, however, will concentrate on the transition from the Khorāsāni to the 'Erāqi style.

De Bruijn correctly observes that there are uncertainties about the exact beginning of the style of 'Erāq. Poets of the Khorāsāni style such as 'Onsori (d. c.1039), Farrokhi from Sistān (d. 1037–8) and Manuchehri from Dāmghān (d. c.1040–1) had a strong influence on the Persian poetic style of later poets. Although all these poets adhere to the 'inimitably simple' style of Khorāsān, each has his own individual traits. Manuchehri, in particular, has a rhetorical style which in some respects – such as its intricacy – stretches the boundaries of the formalized style of the period, and Manuchehri is followed in this by several poets of subsequent centuries.

In *Courtly Riddles* I presented the hypothesis that the development of the genres 'literary description' (*vasf*) and literary riddles in the eleventh century ultimately brought on the change from the plain style of Khorāsān to a more complex 'Erāqi style, from the middle of the twelfth century.<sup>5</sup> I showed how poets demonstrated their poetic talent in these genres by contriving new imagery and devising new metaphors within the firm conventions of Persian poetic principles. The main genres in which the poetic development (in terms of rhetoric embellishment) took place were *vasf* and literary riddle, which appeared in the poetry of the Khorāsāni style and became gradually more popular as time passed. In several cases, *vasf* dominated the style.

In this essay, I would like to show how riddling and a specific type of description, both found in Manuchehri's poetry, were taken over by poets in the twelfth century. What is conspicuous in Manuchehri's style is his endeavour to paint an object or other themes through a minutely detailed, precise and vivid description. It is as if he has a camera in his hands and focuses his lens on the tiniest elements of his subject. While Manuchehri shares 'inimitable simplicity' with his contemporaries, his style is more lively and visual. Manuchehri tries to convey his description through the use of new metaphors and rhetorical strategies. He focuses on subjects in courtly life, which were limited. Other poets were writing on the same subjects. The metaphors used in such descriptions had once been novel, but after a while they would lose their power and become mere clichés. Poets therefore tried to create distinctive ways of depicting a subject. For instance, wine is personalized as 'daughter of the vine' (*dokhtar-e raz*) and 'daughter of Jamshid' (*dokhtar-e Jamshid*) by Ghaznavid poets. To distinguish himself from his contemporaries, Manuchehri adds ritualistic and mythical dimensions to this topos, a point excellently discussed by William Hanaway in his 1988 article, 'Blood and Wine: Sacrifice and Celebration in Manūchihri's Wine Poetry'.<sup>6</sup> Manuchehri places such names in a narrative context, in which wine, represented by a grape or other fruit, describes



how she becomes pregnant by the sun, how she grows, and finally how the farmer harvests the grapes, preparing wine for the king. This way of presenting wine springs from Rudaki's famous panegyric 'the mother of the vine' (dating from approximately 880–941 CE), which superbly depicts a convivial courtly gathering.<sup>7</sup> By Manuchehri's time, references to wine as the daughter of the vine or of Jamshid had become clichés.<sup>8</sup> Manuchehri is deeply aware of this and avoids the overuse of the terms.

Before continuing my discussion of the development of style, I will cite the opening lines (the *nasib*) of Panegyric 63, in which Manuchehri praises Abu Sahl Sowzani, known as Sheykh al-Amid:<sup>9</sup>

1. Thus I read today in a book: 'one of the daughters of Jamshid is alive.
2. She has been imprisoned in a watchtower for some seven or eight hundred years.
3. She is still in a tower of the Zoroastrian priests, standing on her feet under a juniper tree.
4. She is neither willing to sit down, nor to lie in bed for a moment.
5. She wishes neither to eat nor to drink; she does not speak [even] to eloquent persons.<sup>10</sup>

Having described this girl, the poet decides to find the house where she resides. On his finding it, the poem continues:

8. I saw a house made of black stones whose opening was as narrow as a hoop.
9. I opened the door through magic and lit a fire like gold.
10. I took the torch, a torch which looked like gold from Herat, its point like a dagger.
11. In the house I saw a great bride with a belly like a pregnant camel, standing on one foot.
12. A ceramic bride who had the seal of her lord, but no gold or ornament.
13. On her earthen waist, she bore seven or eight belts; on her head she wore a fine veil.
14. Being pregnant, she had put her belly forward; the parting of her hair was as wide as a date tree.
15. So much clay lay in that parting, she wore a crown of clay.
16. Her bosom and neck were robust, like those of an elephant; the sole of her foot was round like a shield.
17. Out of love, I ran to her, as a sister would run to a sister.
18. Gently I removed from her head the veil, thinner than the wings of a gnat.
19. I cleaned her face with my sleeve, removing all dust, dirt and ash.
20. I took the crown of clay from her head, as one removes a helmet from the head of a soldier.

21. Under her crown I saw very well a mouth, and beneath the mouth her throat.
22. I saw her lips, like the lips of the Negros, like the lips of a camel when they are turned out.
23. There was a way to her Salsabil,<sup>11</sup> a broad doorway in her mouth.
24. The smell of musk wafted from her mouth, as the scent of perfume fills the air from an incense box.
25. I was seized by love for her Salsabil, as you are seized by an angelic face.
26. I removed her seal of virginity, and took one cup from her Salsabil.
27. One drop of her fell on my hand, turning the palm of my hand to Kowthar.<sup>12</sup>
28. I smelled her, and her scent made a narcissus grow from each hair on my body.
29. I brought my lips to the cup: my lips changed to sugar.

The poem is written for a courtly audience who knows very well what Manuchehri is describing. This daughter of Jamshid is wine, permitted in Zoroastrianism but condemned in Islam.<sup>13</sup> To surprise his audience, and to avoid the simple cliché of the name ‘daughter of Jamshid’, the poet obliges himself to use a narrative strategy, depicting this daughter in almost 30 couplets. By applying this strategy, the poet avoids clichéd images, such as wine being imprisoned in the bottle. He teases the audience, luring them to listen, visualize and interpret.

The poet wants the audience to see, rather than to read. His main intention is to present the daughter of Jamshid to us visually. It appears the poet is describing a rotund ceramic jar. It has a large belly, without any ornamentation, and it stands on one foot. The poet continues in more detail in the following lines – something that I have not seen in any other panegyric of the period. She wears seven or eight belts (or a belt consisted of seven or eight rows) on her waist, and a transparent and fine veil on her face. She has a headdress of *gel* (dust or clay).<sup>14</sup> She is pregnant, and her neck and bosom are stout. Her hair parting is clearly visible, as if she has combed her hair on either side of her head, presumably indicating two prominent handles emerging from or close to the lip of the jar, as in Nikosthenic amphorae. The riddling formulation becomes clear in couplet 11, which says she stands on one foot; but for listeners in any doubt, couplet 16 tells us that the sole of her foot is round like a shield. Clearly the audience is not intended to have any sustained doubt about what object is being described. This part of the poem, a unique piece in classical Persian panegyric poetry, produces not puzzlement but dawning comprehension, keeping pace with the reading, which is essential, as the following lines turn to the attributes of the wine contained in the jar.

In fact, such a detailed visual description has little to do with wine. It has all to do with the poet’s desire to show his poetic power, peerless style and strong

imagination. In this case, we see the interaction of the poet with the potter. By painting the jar in words, the poet preserves this object of art for as long as his poem is remembered. Interactions between poets and artists are not unusual: instances are reported in Beyhaqi's chronicle, a Ghaznavid history covering the years 1030–41. In his studies on Manuchehri, Jerome Clinton observes that poets were inspired by nature as well as by works of art at the palace. He refers to descriptions of gardens at the Persian New Year, which look 'like paintings done on water-blue-paper', and to the poets' 'fondness for likening the garden to a rich brocade, embroidered with gems and precious metals, and for filling it with the scents of costly perfumes ...'<sup>15</sup>

In the second part of Manuchehri's description (couplets 17–29), the poetic persona re-enters the picture. On seeing the jar/woman, he runs to her as two sisters might run to each other – that is, without social inhibitions. The metaphor further personifies the object. As soon as he reaches her, he removes the veil (an act with greater implications in an Islamic context), and cleans dust from her 'face'. The poet removes the crown of clay and sees the woman's lips, turned outward as the mouth of a jar is. The play with erotically tinged images continues, listing her neck, throat and perfume, and the seal of her virginity. From line 25, the poet reconnects his description with clichéd images used in wine poetry.

By presenting this vivid and animated depiction of a wine-jar with such pictorial precision, Manuchehri stimulates our imagination and visualization in such a way that his texts become a painting – a concrete, vivid, real object with its own existence.<sup>16</sup> It is often stated by historians of Persian literature that the poetry of the period depicts an ideal world rather than everyday reality. This is true, but at the same time we have depictions such as this, which are imaginative, but include elements from real life. This visual poetic style of Persian poets may be a continuation of pre-Islamic Persian arts. During the Sasanian period, the arts had social, political and religious functions. After the end of the Sasanian dynasty, at the hands of the rising Muslim Empire, this aspect of the art was transferred mainly to Persian poetry, poetry being the primary courtly art. The Ghaznavids and other Islamic dynasties modelled their political system on the Sasanian bureaucracy, and their artists were influenced by the way courtiers were celebrated in Sasanian depictions. Many *nasibs* connect aspects of daily life to pre-Islamic Persian tradition, and visual artefacts are not an exception. Clinton rightly considers the *qasideh* a 'frieze or bas relief, a work for public display whose purpose was to celebrate the virtues and accomplishments of the artist's patron'.<sup>17</sup>

We cannot know whether Manuchehri's depiction of the wine-jar is based upon a particularly noteworthy example in the court, but it is clear that he had a certain image in his mind, perhaps elaborating on it from imagination. He is not the only poet to visualize wine-drinking scenes. In one of his poems, Abu Nowās depicts a scene painted in a wine cup. As Sumi has indicated, such vivid

descriptions do not occur in early Arabic poetry, but they were introduced to Arabic literature by non-Arab poets.<sup>18</sup> Another example is Ebn Khafājah (1058–1138), whose descriptive poetry is influenced by Mahyār al-Deylami. It is also very possible that he imitated earlier poets. Abu Yahyā Tāher b. Fazl b. Mohammad b. Mohtāj (d. c.992) compared a bottle of beer (*foqqā'*) with a beautiful woman in the following short poem:

A belle with a dark [lit. green] complexion and a small mouth  
who increases the joy of young and old.

If you make her naked by taking the veil from her head  
she will be enraged, throwing froth from her mouth.

If you desire to give her kisses  
she will laugh and will make you cry.<sup>19</sup>

What Manuchehri is doing in his depiction of the jar of wine is making an obvious attempt to entertain the courtly audience, to foreground his innovative poetic genius, and to revive the pre-Islamic cultural tradition. In this effort, he relies on a rhetorical strategy used in description (*vasf*) and in literary riddles. The piece is, as Arberry has put it, 'a remarkable bacchic sequence enigmatically describing a vat of wine'.<sup>20</sup> The poet's avoidance of clichéd tropes, and his positioning of these tropes in a narrative context, gives his poem enigmatic elements as well as a visual, ekphrastic layer.

The strength of this description lies in its ekphrastic features. The term *ekphrasis* refers to a style of poetic writing that centres on the visual arts, artistic objects, or highly visual descriptions. Ekphrasis means 'speaking out' or 'telling in full'. James A. W. Heffernan defines ekphrasis as 'the rhetorical technique of envoicing a silent object', speaking not only 'about works of art but also to and for them'.<sup>21</sup> Ekphrasis, he says, evokes the power of an artefact: 'to fix, excite, amaze, entrance, disturb, or intimidate the viewer'.<sup>22</sup> In short, it means to put pictures into words that invoke images in the reader's mind.<sup>23</sup> Several ekphrastic passages can be found in classical Persian poetry. In Manuchehri's *nasib*, the ekphrasis, in the form of an anecdote, provides the poem with a sublime opening, capturing the audience's attention. The poet says that he has read in a book that one of King Jamshid's daughters is still alive and has been imprisoned in a palace for centuries. Like a camera, the poet zooms closer, progressively pinpointing the locality: she is incarcerated in the house of the Zoroastrians, under a poplar tree, eschewing food and drink.

The poem possesses a riddling element as well. Although the poet depicts a jar of wine and the audience expects to hear a unique description, the poet avoids the common way of describing a courtly subject, developing a strategy to postpone naming the subject. By leaving the subject unstated, the poet places the courtly audience in the flattering position of knowing what is unsaid. The poet uses the suspended clarification of the subject to display his poetic talents in describing a subject at length. The courtly audience appreciates the poet's

talent, is grateful for the aesthetic pleasure the poet offers them, and is gracefully entertained; the courtly gathering has assumed a playful twist.

Arthur J. Arberry cites Manuchehri's poem in his *Classical Persian Literature*, in the context of the efforts of eleventh-century poets such as 'Onsori, Farrokhi and Manuchehri to develop greater rhetorical embellishment: 'It would have been ['Onsori's] authority ... which set the fashion for that multiplication of rhetorical embellishment which characterizes the poetry of the Ghaznavid and post-Ghaznavid period.'<sup>24</sup> To buttress his argument, Arberry cites 'Onsori's description of a sword, cited below, and states that 'The brilliance of his invention, coupled to an astonishing fluency and euphony of language, defies adequate translation ...'<sup>25</sup>

What is that liquid thing resembling fire, that steel resembling silk?  
It has a body without a soul; pure like a soul free from the body.

In its movement it is water, at any movement it gleams;  
Hurl it, it is an arrow; stretch your hand towards it, it is a bow.

It is not aware of intellect, yet it is in the brain like intellect;  
It is not aware of suspicion, yet it is in the heart like suspicion.

Have you seen a mirror covered with small pearls?  
Have you ever seen chips of diamond embroidered in silken stuff?

When it is used, the jewels strike the eye  
As fine as a heaven of stars in limpid water.<sup>26</sup>

The poem is a literary riddle – the only riddle by 'Onsori that has come down to us. What happens in Manuchehri's description and 'Onsori's poem is that the poet wants to find a new distinctive way of showing his talents and entertaining the audience. Literary riddles became increasingly popular from the end of the eleventh century. Although these riddles have their own formal characteristics, in many cases they resemble a 'description', and it is sometimes hard to distinguish a 'description' from a riddle. In riddles, the poet usually deliberately leaves out the part of the description that would make it transparent, whereas in 'description' the poet eventually reveals all the clues, intending not so much to puzzle as to evoke admiration for his skill in devising metaphors. In riddles, the poet would intentionally conceal the clue under unfamiliar metaphors to lead the reader astray. Both literary forms involve parallelism (multiple metaphors for a single subject), innovation, and, to varying degrees, abstruseness.

This rhetorical embellishment and innovation was not limited to Ghazna as the centre of literary and cultural activity, but also extended to Lahore and Punjab, where poets such as Abu 'l-Faraj Runi (d. c.1099) and Mas'ud-e Sa'd-e Salmān (c.1046–1121) introduced stylistic changes and new poetic genres and forms. As de Bruijn has indicated, Mas'ud-e Sa'd's introduction of new poetic elements 'anticipated later developments finally resulting in the style of 'Erāq'.<sup>27</sup> The development continued in the twelfth century with poets such as

Mo'ezzi, Anvari, Nezāmi of Ganjeh, Khāqāni of Shirvān, and a number of others. The twelfth century became, as Clinton says, an age of 'a continuous refinement of the language of metaphor.'<sup>28</sup> Several poets of this period were *poetae docti*, using scientific knowledge to contrive imagery and metaphors, which also made the poetry enigmatic.<sup>29</sup>

What Manuchehri's description (and also 'Onsori's poem) display is a special attention to rhetorical strategy (in both cases aimed at suspending comprehension) and rhetorical embellishment. Embellishment was a feature of the style of Khorāsān, which was further elaborated in that of 'Erāq. It is not simply flowery language: it reflects a heightened appreciation of novel metaphors in the description of objects and ideas. During the period of the style of Khorāsān, the objects and ideas pertaining to courtly life that were described related to the administrative system (symbolized by a pen, book and royal ring), or military power (a horse, elephant, sword, and bow and arrow), or a king's traits (reputation, magnanimity, bravery, generosity), or aspects of social life at court, such as candles, mirrors or musical instruments. As there was fierce competition between courtly poets, they tried to excel by weaving rare metaphors into their descriptions to capture the attention of the audience, who were demanding connoisseurs. The poetry also contains an element of play for the courtly audience. These descriptions appeared especially in the opening lines of a panegyric (*nasib*), and would often connect aspects of the description to the character-traits of the person being praised. They functioned as a political emblem, as an embellishment, for entertainment and aesthetic grace at the court's social gatherings. Where a description assumed a riddling character, it could be used to test the intelligence of the audience. The arrangement of the volumes of collected poetry produced by the poets in this period does not always distinguish between descriptions and riddles. The rubrics may contain the word 'riddle' (*chistān*), or description (*vasf*), or neither. *Vasf* is commonly used to categorize panegyrics, and has a wide range of connotations such as 'distinguishing mark', 'depiction', 'embellishment', 'quality', 'attribute', and so on.<sup>30</sup>

The development of poetic style is visible in *vasf* passages, and can be regarded as an internal poetic development. But external factors, particularly the geographical and dynastic shift that coincided with the change from the Khorāsāni to the 'Erāqi style, and cultural and religious incentives, also affected this development. The foundation of the Seljuq dynasty not only reunified Persia both politically and religiously, but also led to the spread of Persian letters in the western provinces.<sup>31</sup>

Religious developments also played a role. The popularity of Sufism, which imbued the poetry of the 'Erāqi style with a religious element, made a large body of Persian poetry ambiguous. Many words in the poetic vocabulary were used as metonyms. For example, 'lover' and 'beloved' could be interpreted in a transcendental context, as could 'wine', 'cup' and 'cupbearer'. God is the

cupbearer, the human body made of water and clay is the cup, and the wine represents God's breath breathed into human beings.

Without denying the influence of Sufism or the other factors mentioned above, I would argue that internal poetic elements precipitated the development of poetic style. While Sanā'i introduced and elaborated on *qalandari* imagery, influencing many poets in subsequent centuries, and Mas'ud-e Sa'd-e Salmān composed prison poems, other poets concentrated their attention on 'description' to show their poetic genius, adding rhetorical embellishment to their poetry in order to outshine other poets. In other words, competition and innovation within the conventional poetic system precipitated the change of style.

By way of example, I would like to refer to the Seljuq poet laureate Amir Mo'ezzi (c.1048–1125), who, like Manuchehri, combines the descriptive and enigmatic in several of his poems. Mo'ezzi plays an important role in Persian stylistic development. He was appreciated during medieval times for his style. 'Owfi states in his *Lobāb al-albāb* that 'the child of rhetoric reached maturity' with Mo'ezzi.<sup>32</sup> Nezāmi 'Aruzi describes him as 'one of the sweetest singers and most graceful wits in Persia, whose poetry reaches the highest level in freshness and sweetness, and excels in fluency and charm'.<sup>33</sup> Modern historians of Persian literature also hail him as an important figure. E. G. Browne states: 'it would not surprise me to learn that almost every simile employed by the later love-poets of western Asia had been employed by Mo'ezzi, and that most of them were first invented and brought into use by him'.<sup>34</sup> Arberry cites 'Abbās Eqbāl, the editor of Mo'ezzi's *Divān*:

from the standpoint of poetry – that is, in regard to style, sweetness of speech, elegance of expression and eloquence of ideas, considered against the background of the requirements of his own time – Mu'izzī stands out as one of the artistic virtuosi of the Persian language. For fluency of expression and control of words perhaps no equal to his *Divān* can be found in all our poetry, with the exception of the *Divān* of Zahir al-Dīn Fāryābī and the *Kullīyāt* of Shaikh Sa'dī.<sup>35</sup>

Abd al-Hoseyn Zarrinkub refers to Mo'ezzi's poetic talent in devising new metaphors and similes in the *vasf* genre.<sup>36</sup> Zabih Allāh Safā reiterates Mo'ezzi's innovative rhetorical strategies to utilize new images and metaphors. Hormoz Davarpanah states that, in his panegyrics, Mo'ezzi 'propounded entirely new thoughts, exhibiting the poet's innovativeness and his concern for developing new ideas'.<sup>37</sup> In what follows, I will discuss one of his poems in which he depicts God's unity (*towhid*), interweaving his 'description' with the death of Mojir al-Dowleh Ardestāni's son. The title of the poem is, 'On unity and the story of the death of the son of Mojir al-Dowleh Ardestāni.'

1. Look at this turquoise-coloured ocean whose shores are invisible  
kingly pearls have risen from its depths to the surface.
2. In it, a golden ship is sometimes high and sometimes low  
In it, a silvery boat is sometimes hidden, sometimes visible.
3. Look at these two triumphant armies side by side  
One from the borders of Rum, one from Africa.
4. In summer and winter they're contraries  
in autumn and spring they're the same.
5. Look at these wandering elephants, suspended in the air  
Consider their growl, like a drum on the battlefield.
6. Fire sparks from their hearts like lances in battle;  
Like pearls raining from the eye on high and low.
7. Look at jewels coming out of steel and stone  
Illuminating the dark world like the sun,
8. As if stone's opposite has been compounded within its body  
pure gold taking form in the midst of a bouquet of roses.
9. Look at this steed that does not rest from travelling  
Sometimes travelling over steppes, sometimes crossing oceans.
10. When it passes above the sea, waves rise from the sea  
When it passes above the steppe, dust rises from the steppe.
11. Look at this, it is burnt, life-giving and full-bodied  
It is mixed with the body and agreeable to the pure soul.
12. When it sheds tears, it makes the earth fresh,  
When it produces vapour, it makes the air dark.
13. Look at this tent erected on running water  
Firmly anchored with heavy nails.
14. Inwardly, it's all stain, pain and complaint  
Outwardly, it's all adornment, colour and beauty.
15. Look at the composition of man, look at this change in conditions  
Look at this gilding of the form, look at this order in things.
16. These novelties, these humours must have a maker.  
If there is no need for the maker, bring a decisive argument.
17. If he made the stars, to whom are you calling among the seven  
[spheres]?  
If the Friend made the humours, to whom are you calling, among the  
four?
18. Detach your heart from the four and the seven, for He whom you  
worship is One,  
He who aids his servants, whose kingdom is His own, by right.
19. He is not the First, such that – through his traces – there can be a  
second.  
The One is not one that you can count on your fingers.



20. His essence is to be known today and to see tomorrow,  
Today, there is knowledge and waiting; beholding, for his servant  
comes tomorrow.
21. Seized in the power of the Divine Decree, people are powerless,  
Powerless and vanquished in the bargain struck between predestination  
and free will.
22. One's share from Him is treasure while the other's share is pain,  
One's share from him is light while the other's share is fire.
23. What was hidden yesterday, he reveals today  
What was revealed last year, he hides this.
24. The many wonders that exist, through his power and works.  
are in the collar of the sky and in the sleeve of time.
25. One of these wonders is that the son of the king's vizier  
has concealed his face in the earth of Marv.
26. He was bright like the moon and Mercury, and bright of mind  
His place was high on the Wheel, but now he's resting below the  
earth.<sup>38</sup>

In this description of God's unity in 24 couplets, Mo'ezzi does not name the subject he is depicting, except in the rubric (if this is not a later interpolation). The language is addressed directly to the reader or audience, emphasizing this relationship through the opening word in the imperative, *bengar*, or 'look', which is repeated 12 times in the first 15 couplets, at the beginning of every four hemistichs. Couplet 15 indicates the end of the sequence, by repeating the verb *bengar* four times. Each pair of couplets forms a unit, in which the poet introduces a new series of imagery and metaphors to depict one aspect of God's unity. Each description is wrapped in a metaphor. The metaphors are not used to test the audience's intelligence, and while they are original and accomplished, the poet hides his presence as writer behind the wonder of God's work and being.

The poet starts his depiction with the skies, using maritime metaphors: the sky is the blue and boundless ocean, the stars are pearls, the sun and moon are boats. He uses antitheses (surface and depth, turquoise and white [pearl], high and low, hidden and revealed, gold and silver) to incite wonder.

In couplets 3 and 4, the poet introduces night and day, with the military image of two armies side by side, differing (in length) in the summer and winter, but the same in autumn and spring. The references to nature and the military are adroitly extended to couplets 5 and 6, in which the poet depicts thunderclouds in the form of elephants hanging in the air. As elephants were used in battle, the poet can link this image to a war scene, comparing the elephant's thunderous roar to the war drum, and the lightning to lances in the battlefield. In the second hemistich of the sixth couplet, the rain falling from the clouds is connected to tears, metonymically referred to as pearls, shed from the eyes.

It is not my intention to give an exhaustive analysis of this poem, but only to point out that in each unit the poet refers to one aspect of God's creative work, encompassing the entire universe. All created elements that the poet names are characterized, in couplet 16, as *badāye* – 'new' and 'novel' things, or wonders – and as *tabāye* – 'natures', 'humours' or 'constitutions'. The poet emphasizes that all created things have a maker, and that their maker is also the one who defines the destiny of human beings.

The poet has used this catalogue of wonders in a novel way to lead into an elegy on the death of Mojir al-Dowleh's son. Reading the descriptive *nasib* as an elegy gives a new layer of meaning to the poem: it is also saying that God is imperishable while everything else must perish, that everything comes from God and returns to God, and mankind has no power to influence God's decision. In couplet 25, death is characterized as a wonder to which man has no access.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this discussion. Firstly, the urge to stand out among contemporary court poets inspired poets such as Manuchehri to create novel imagery in plain words. While the plain diction allowed the audience to divine the subject of a description, the poet knew how to maintain some ambiguity. The visual element of the description, the technique of ekphrasis, enabled a poet such as Manuchehri to convince his demanding courtly audience of his poetic skills, mixing the real with illusion, past nostalgia with the tangible present. Through such visual description, the poet increased the audience's delight, and through the image of the jar as a lady imprisoned in a Zoroastrian tower, the poet underlined that a wine-drinking party was a cultural event, linking Islamic times to pre-Islamic Persian culture.

In terms of stylistic development, it can be stated that elements characteristic of the style of 'Erāq, such as extended metaphors and rhetorical ornamentation, started with poets of the Khorāsāni style such as Manuchehri, were further developed by Mo'ezzi, and were maintained by poets of the subsequent century. Amir Mo'ezzi's poem, for instance, combines in his subject-matter the encomium on God's unity with elegy, and imagery in plain words with an enigmatic layer. Mo'ezzi's poem resembles Manuchehri's in not naming the subject of his description, the explicit address to a courtly audience, in structuring the depicted subject as a sequence of metaphors, and in the poet's virtuosity and originality. While Manuchehri incorporates a narrative with riddling metaphors to hold the audience's attention, Mo'ezzi's work begins as pure description through metaphors.

Description (*vasf*) became increasingly popular with poets from the middle of the eleventh century. The desire to excel in producing original metaphors in these *vasfs* was so intense that *vasf* passages often resemble a riddle. It is also notable that the popularity of *vasf* went hand in hand with the popularity of literary riddles. The audience for the *vasf* was already familiar with the

pleasures of suspended comprehension and resolution that the riddle offers. In the volumes of collected poetry of poets such as Mas'ud-e Sa'd-e Salmān, Amir Mo'ezzi and 'Osmān-e Mokhtārī (c.1074–1118), we see an increasing use of *vasf* and riddles in the opening of panegyrics. The use of an expanding catalogue of rhetorical ornamentation for different purposes became a vogue with these poets, and became characteristic of their style in descriptions. This trend continued in subsequent centuries.

Mo'ezzi could have made an encomium on God with direct praise, or by listing God's works in creation and inviting admiration for them, but he chose to describe individual cosmological elements in a way that evokes admiration for the poet's accomplishment and originality, and transfers this admiration to the subject of the metaphor. Consider the metaphor of a thundercloud as an elephant suspended in the sky, and bellowing. It is a wonder-full metaphor, and our wonder at the metaphor affects the way we see thunderclouds.

Mo'ezzi's metaphors may look like riddles, but they are examples of *vasf*. In the first place, a riddle is a series of metaphors on one subject, whereas this is a series of riddling metaphors on different aspects of God's creation. Moreover, in a true riddle, the aesthetic lies in suspended comprehension and admiration for poetic skill, as well as self-admiration for the reader's cleverness in guessing the riddle. Once the riddle has been resolved, all elements must fall into place. The best riddles are hard to guess, but, once they are solved, it transpires that the clues were plentiful and that the correct solution really was the only possible one all along. In *vasf*, the subject of the metaphor is frequently clear from the outset. The reader needs little erudition to guess that a golden ship in an ocean refers to the sun, and if he misses it, the silvery boat in the next line should be enough. The description is apt and beautiful, but hardly enigmatic. Admittedly, not every metaphor is as easily deduced as the ones in the opening lines, but admiration for the poet's skill in this description lies in the way he opens each unit of two couplets with one or more metaphors that all add up to what he seeks to evoke: admiration for the wonders of creation.

In Mo'ezzi's poem the metaphors are as surprising and delightful as they would be if they were a riddle, but they have become a poetic tool used to evoke wonder and prepare the audience to accept that God's ways are beyond their comprehension. The purpose of the poem is not only to kindle wonder at God's creative power and the poet's skills: these serve as a framework for mourning the death of Mojir al-Dowleh. By using original metaphors to depict God's creation and power, the poet places the audience in a frame of mind to appreciate the scale of God's power and the wonder of his works. When he has done this, he introduces the imponderable fact that the son of Mojir al-Dowleh has been taken away. Death is also one of God's wonders. The impenetrability of death and the loss of a dear one is placed in a literary frame in which man's shortcomings and powerlessness are consistent with the power of God's creative – and destructive – decrees. The series of metaphors in the poem's

opening are given a greater meaning, as they are used to impress on the bereaved father the limits to human power and understanding, and thus reconcile him to fate. Mo‘ezzi is sometimes characterized as an artificial poet and charged with insincerity, but this poem shows the opposite.<sup>39</sup>

## Notes:

1. I am grateful to Professor J. T. P. de Bruijn, Dr. M. van Staden and S. McGlinn, who read versions of this article. J. T. P. de Bruijn has listed several classifications of Persian poetic styles in his article, 'Iran: vii. Literature', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Banquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W. P. Heinrichs, Brill Online, 2014 (accessed 9 October 2014) <[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/iran-COM\\_0377](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/iran-COM_0377)>. For a systematic study of stylistic developments, based on the use of 'water', see D. Meneghini Correale, 'The Handling of Āb/water in Farruḥī, Hāfiz and Tālib,' *Eurasiatica* 36 (Venice, 1993).
2. As summarized by de Bruijn, 'Iran: vii. Literature', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn; see also W. Heinz, *Der indische Stil in der persischen Literatur* (Wiesbaden, 1973), p. 4; E. Yarshater, 'The Indian or Safavid Style: Progress or Decline', in E. Yarshater, ed., *Persian Literature* (New York, 1988), pp. 249–88.
3. De Bruijn, 'Sabk-i Hindī', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn <[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/sabk-i-hindi-SIM\\_6377](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/sabk-i-hindi-SIM_6377)>.
4. Ibid.
5. A. A. Seyed-Gohrab, *Courtly Riddles: Enigmatic Embellishments in Early Persian Poetry* (Leiden, 2010).
6. W. L. Hanaway, 'Blood and Wine: Sacrifice and Celebration in Manūchihri's Wine Poetry', *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 26 (1988), pp. 69–80; A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, 'The Wine-Bull and the Magian Master', in P. Gignoux, ed., *Recurrent Patterns in Iranian Religions: From Mazdaism to Sufism* (Paris, 1992), pp. 101–34. On Manuchehri's role in the development of the Persian panegyrics, see J. Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 54–68; for a general introduction to Persian panegyrics, see J. Scott Meisami, 'Poetic Microcosms: The Persian Qasida to the End of the Twelfth Century', in S. Sperl and Ch. Shackleton, eds, *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, I (Leiden, 1996), pp. 137–82.
7. See S. Tabatabai, *Father of Persian Verse: Rudaki and his Poetry* (Leiden, 2010); for a translation of 'The Mother of Vine', see pp. 34–49. On Rudaki's direct style, see F. de Blois, 'Rūdakī', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn <[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ru-daki-SIM\\_6319](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ru-daki-SIM_6319)>.
8. E. Yarshater, 'The Theme of Wine and Wine-Drinking and the Concept of the Beloved in Early Persian Poetry', *Studia Islamica* 13 (1960), p. 45.
9. This poem is also translated in A. J. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature* (Richmond, 1994 [1958]), pp. 56–7. On poetry Manuchehri composed for Abu Sahl Sowzani and other patrons, see F. D. Lewis, 'Sincerely Flattering Panegyrics: The Shrinking Ghaznavid Qasida', in F. D. Lewis and S. Sharma, eds, *The Necklace of the Pleiades: 24 Essays on Persian Literature, Culture and Religion* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 241–4.
10. M. Dabir-Seyāqi, ed., *Divān-e Manuchehri-ye Dāmghāni* (Tehran, 1996), pp. 120–1.
11. A river in paradise referred to in the Qur'an (76:18). See Amira el-Zein, 'Water of Paradise', *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Brill Online, 2014 (9 October 2014) <[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-the-quran/water-of-paradise-EQSIM\\_00453](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-the-quran/water-of-paradise-EQSIM_00453)>.
12. Name of a river in Paradise (Qur'an 108: 1).

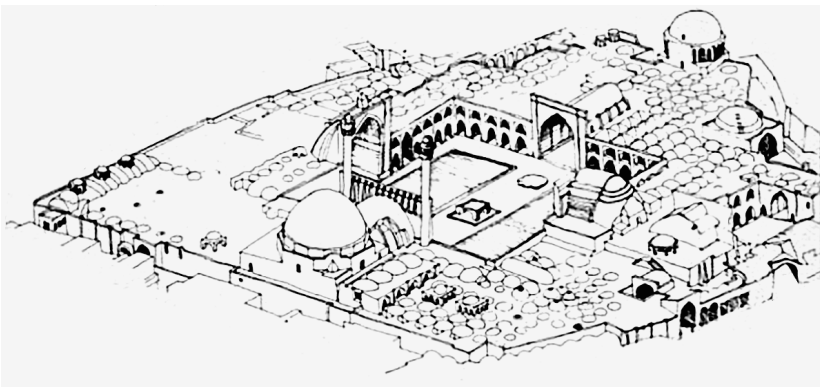
13. For more general information about wine and wine-drinking, see J. E. Bencheikh, 'Khamriyya', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn <[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/k-h-amriyya-COM\\_0491](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/k-h-amriyya-COM_0491)>; J. W. Clinton, 'Bāda', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bada-pahl>> (originally published December 15 1988; last updated 19 August 2011); W. L. Hanaway, 'Sākī: 2. In Persian Usage', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn <[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/sa-k-i-COM\\_0979](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/sa-k-i-COM_0979)>.
14. Orthographically the word can also be read as *gol* ('rose'). I prefer to read it as 'clay', because the poet states that dust or clay had covered the crown of her head, and because baked clay stoppers were sometimes used in the mouths of wine jars.
15. J. W. Clinton, *The Divan of Manuchehrī Dāmghānī: A Critical Study* (Minneapolis, 1972), p. 128.
16. C. H. de Fouchécour, *La description de la nature dans la poésie lyrique persane du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1969); A. A. Seyed-Gohrab, 'The Art of Riddling in Classical Persian Poetry', in *Edebiyat: The Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures* 12 (2001), pp. 15–36; M. R. Shafī'i Kadkani, *Sovar-e khayāl dar she'r-e Fārsi* (Tehran, 1987); G.-H. Yusofi, *Chashmeh-ye rowshan* (Tehran, 1992), pp. 62–74; 'A.-H. Zarrinkub, *Bā kāravān-e howleh* (Tehran, 1979), pp. 55–68; B. Z. Foruzānfār, *Sokhan va sokhanvarān* (Tehran, 1990); E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (Cambridge, 1956), II, pp. 30–4, 153–6.
17. Clinton, *Divan of Manūchihri*, p. 130.
18. A. M. Sumi, *Description in Classical Arabic Poetry: Wasf, Ekphrasis, and Interarts Theory* (Leiden, 2004), p. 194. Analysing ekphrastic technique in the Arabic genre of *wasf*, Sumi states that, as a poetic device, *wasf* 'does not only seek mimetic representation and should not be considered merely "description," but rather should be interpreted as metaphorical image'.
19. See A. Edārechi Gilāni, *Shā'erān-e ham'asr-e Rudaki* (Tehran, 1991), p. 181; for the use of beer as a literary topos, see N. Pourjavady, 'Foq' gowshudan-e Ferdowsi va sepas 'Attār', in *Bu-ye Jān: maqāleh-hā-ī dar bāreh-ye she'r-e 'erfāni-ye Fārsi* (Tehran, 1993), pp. 72–122.
20. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature*, p. 56.
21. James A. W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago/London, 1993), pp. 6–7.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
23. Murray Krieger, 'The Problem of Ekphrasis: Image and Words, Space and Time—and the Literary Work', in V. Robillard and E. Jongeneel, *Pictures into Words: Theoretical and Descriptive Approaches to Ekphrasis* (Amsterdam, 1998), p. 4. One of the best-known English poems that speaks through a painting is W. H. Auden's 'Musee Des Beaux Arts', whose first two lines tell us: 'About suffering they were never wrong, the Old Masters; how well, they understood / Its human position ...' The poem dwells on how artists and poets have described the human condition. Auden describes Breughel's *Icarus*, his failure to fly representing man's failure. Life runs its course while a boy falls out of the sky. On the sunny day, the ploughman hears the boy falling into the water, the ship sails away; one hears the splash, another sees him falling: for none is it an important failure!
24. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature*, p. 54.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 54–5.
26. For a full translation and analysis of this riddle, see A. A. Seyed-Gohrab, *Courtly Riddles: Enigmatic Embellishments in Early Persian Poetry* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 183–4.

27. De Bruijn, 'Iran: vii. Literature'. Mas'ud-e Sa'd-e Salmān composed several literary riddles, introduced literary forms such as the *habseyyāt* ('prison poem'), *shahr-āshub* ('disturber of the city' poem), and *bārahmāsā* (poems in which the poet catalogues the Persian months, weeks and days by referring to festivals). See S. Sharma, *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier: Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān of Lahore* (Delhi, 2000), pp. 107–35. See also de Bruijn, 'Habsiyya', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn <[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/h-absiyya-SIM\\_8580](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/h-absiyya-SIM_8580)>; and 'Shahrangīz: 1. In Persian', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn <[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/s-h-ahrangī-z-COM\\_1026](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/s-h-ahrangī-z-COM_1026)>. For Mas'ud-e Sa'd-e Salmān's other literary innovations, see F. D. Lewis, 'The Rise and Fall of a Persian Refrain: The *radif* 'ātash u āb', in S. P. Stetkevych, *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry* (Bloomington/Indianapolis, 1994), p. 204. See also Seyed-Gohrab, *Courtly Riddles*, pp. 86–113.
28. See J. W. Clinton, 'Esthetics by Implication: What Metaphors of Craft Tell us about the Unity of the Persian Qasida', in *Edebiyāt* IV: 1 (1979), p. 76.
29. It should be mentioned that, in the second part of the eleventh century, other developments were taking place. Nāser-e Khosrow (d. c.1072–7) devoted his attention to philosophical themes, propagating the Ismaili cause, and writing a prodigious number of religio-philosophical poems; Sanā'i started to compose homiletic and antinomian poetry. On Nāser-e Khosrow, see A. C. Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw: The Ruby of Badakhshan, A Portrait of the Persian Poet, Traveller and Philosopher* (London/New York, 2003); on Sanā'i, see J. T. P. de Bruijn, *Of Piety and Poetry: The Interaction of Religion and Literature in the Life and Works of Hakīm Sanā'ī of Ghazna* (Leiden, 1983).
30. Sumi, *Description in Classical Arabic Poetry*, p. 5; see also A. Arazi, 'Wasf: I. In poetry', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn <[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/was-f-COM\\_1341](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/was-f-COM_1341)>; A. A. Seyed-Gohrab, 'Wasf', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/wasf>> (originally published 7 April 2008; last updated 7 April 2008).
31. De Bruijn, 'Iran: vii. Literature', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn.
32. As cited in E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (Cambridge, 1956), II, p. 328.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 327.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 329–30.
35. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature*, p. 112.
36. 'Abd al-Hoseyn Zarrinkub, *Bā kāravān-e howleh: majmu'eh-ye naqd-e adabi* (Tehran, 1993), p. 151.
37. See Hormoz Davarpanah, 'Mo'ezzi', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/moezzi-nisaburi>> (originally published 7 April 2008; last updated 7 April 2008).
38. Amir Mo'ezzi, *Divān*, ed. N. Heyyeri (Tehran, 1983), pp. 342–3.
39. See, for instance, Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature*, p. 114.

## Architecture and Politics: The North and South Dome Chambers of the Isfahan Jāmi‘

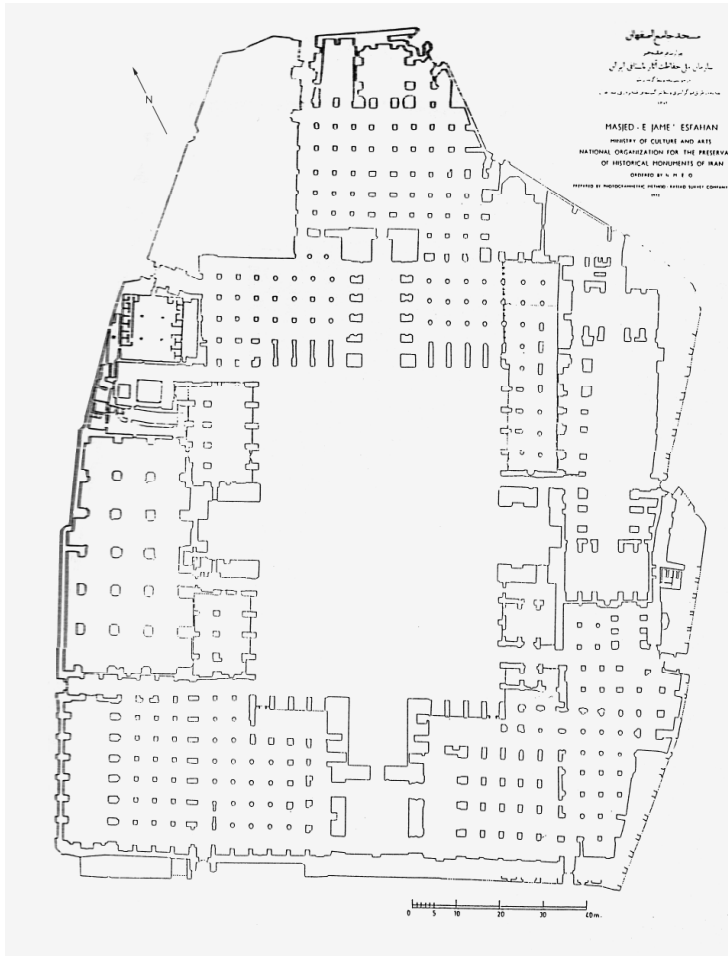
Robert Hillenbrand  
(Universities of Edinburgh and St Andrews)

The Friday Mosque of Isfahan is, beyond doubt, the best-known monument of Seljuq religious architecture in Iran, even though only parts of it have survived the depredations of the centuries (Figures 8.1 and 8.2). At the heart of this largely vanished eleventh- to twelfth-century mosque lies, uniquely in the Islamic architecture of Iran,<sup>1</sup> the concept of two opposed dome chambers: one huge, the other small. Both are masterpieces. Each bears the name of the vizier who ordered it. The second was built very soon after the first, and the plain fact is that nobody knows why. It seems wholly unlikely that it was part of the original plan for the Seljuq mosque. This paper will attempt to probe the relationship between these two domes, and also the role that each of them was intended to play in the mosque. But that discussion leads inevitably to an examination of another relationship – namely, the one between the two viziers themselves. For in this case architecture reflects politics.



*Fig. 8.1 Isfahan, Friday Mosque, three-dimensional drawing (after Hillenbrand, Islamic Architecture).*





*Fig. 8.2 Plan of mosque (photogrammetric view; after Laleh).*

The 1080s opened with Nizām al-Mulk, perhaps the outstanding Persian politician of the entire medieval period, exercising a firm grip on the levers of power in the Seljuq state, as he had done for the previous 20 years or so. But he was getting quite elderly, and the young Seljuq sultan, Malikshāh, 40 years his junior and increasingly eager to assert himself, was becoming restive under the elder statesman's tutelage. And it was not only the Turkish sultan who, having entered man's estate – he had succeeded to power as a teenager – in time began to chafe under Nizām al-Mulk's regime. There was also the ever-present danger of rivals from within the ranks of the Persian bureaucracy. The principal threat was a 'handsome intriguer'<sup>2</sup> by the name of Tāj al-Mulk,<sup>3</sup> who had insinuated

himself into the good graces of Malikshāh and then into those of the sultan's wife, Terken Khātun, whom he served as secretary and privy counsellor.<sup>4</sup> Ebn Khallikān notes that 'a spirit of hatred and jealousy having sprung up between Nizām al-Mulk and Taj al-Mulk Abi'l-Ghanaim Ibn Darest',<sup>5</sup> the latter suborned the poet Ibn al-Habbāriyya to lampoon Nizām al-Mulk even though the poet had benefitted from the older man's kindness; but Nizām al-Mulk forgave him on that occasion.<sup>6</sup> An alternative axis of power developed, and indeed, on the murder of Nizām al-Mulk, Malikshāh appointed Tāj al-Mulk to succeed to his office. But he did not long enjoy the fruit of his intrigues, for he was himself killed within five months – at the age of 47.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the deaths of Nizām al-Mulk, Malikshāh, Tāj al-Mulk, Ja'far (the son of the Caliph al-Muqtadī by Malikshāh's daughter), the Caliph al-Muqtadī, Terken Khātun, and Mahmud (the son of Malikshāh and Terken Khātun, whom al-Muqtadī had proclaimed as Malikshāh's successor) all occurred, in that order, within a space of almost exactly two years,<sup>8</sup> leaving the political stage looking like the closing moments of *Hamlet*.

The rivalry between Nizām al-Mulk and Tāj al-Mulk spilled over into the field of architecture. Or, to be more accurate, the desire of Tāj al-Mulk to express his political rivalry with Nizām al-Mulk found one focus in architecture.<sup>9</sup> The old vizier had added a huge and technically innovative dome chamber to the sanctuary of the Friday Mosque of Isfahan, one of the Seljuq capitals, probably, as Sheila Blair has suggested, in the winter of 1086–7 (Figure 8.3).<sup>10</sup> This was an epoch-making building, quite possibly the largest

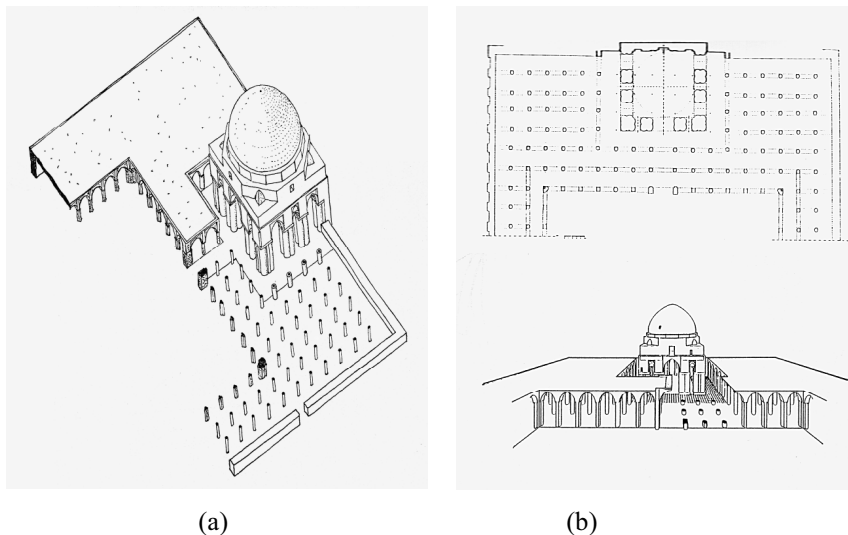
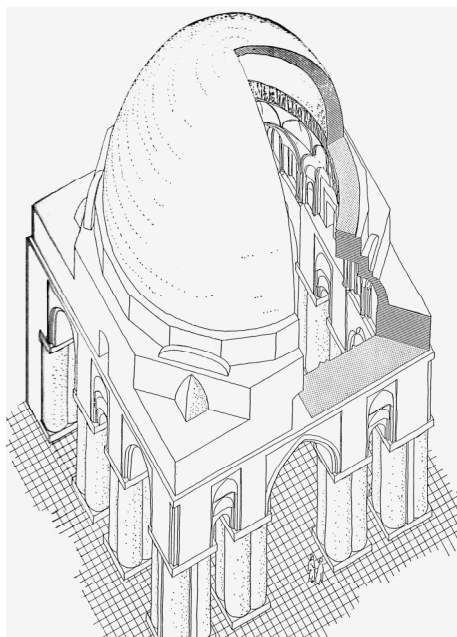
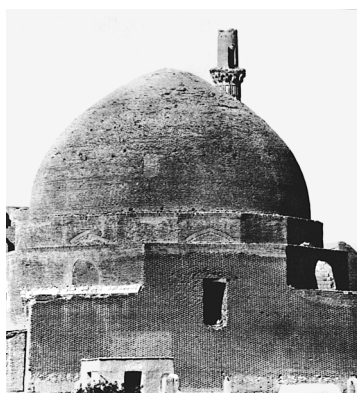


Fig. 8.3 Reconstruction of how the south dome chamber was inserted into the earlier mosque (after Galdieri, Isfahan).

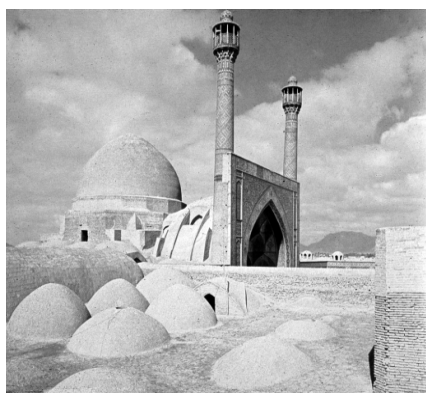
dome in the Islamic world at that time, with a height of 26.97 metres and a diameter between 14.3 metres and 14.6 metres (Figure 8.4).<sup>11</sup> It would assuredly have attracted a great deal of attention – not just because of its size, but because of its location, set squarely athwart the extensive but low covered sanctuary and rearing gigantically above it. That combination of size and site said much about the power of the sultan.<sup>12</sup> It made the dome an emblem of his authority, visible to all in the mosque where all adult males worshipped (Figure 8.5). All this was new and radical in the Iranian context, though not in the Near East, the Maghrib and al-Andalus.<sup>13</sup> In the precise political context of its time, it may also have been intended in part as a peace offering to the Seljuq sultan, with whom Nizām al-Mulk's relationship, as we have seen, was becoming increasingly precarious. Hence perhaps the marked contrast in the main



*Fig. 8.4 Axonometric view of south dome chamber (after Galdieri, Isfahan).*



(a)



(b)

*Fig. 8.5 Exterior view of south dome.*

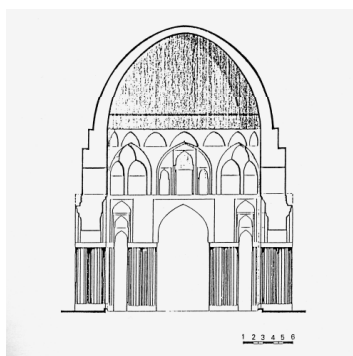
inscription of this dome chamber between the eulogistic and high-sounding titles of the sultan, which take up most of the available space, and the humble way in which Nizām al-Mulk refers to himself.<sup>14</sup>

Earlier scholarship had placed this dome chamber around 1070–5,<sup>15</sup> or 1080.<sup>16</sup> It may not seem a very significant change to alter the date by a period of between 7 and 17 years, but the political implications of the new and later date proposed and so convincingly argued by Sheila Blair are, as outlined above, momentous indeed. In the narrower context of architecture, that date suggests that the patron of the north dome (Tāj al-Mulk) was stung into immediate action by the construction of the south dome – indeed, given the sophistication of the north dome, it is quite possible that it was begun even before the south dome was finished. That north dome is a bold political statement; it can be construed as a public slap in the face for Nizām al-Mulk. Not only does it suggest in plain physical terms the power and authority of Tāj al-Mulk in Isfahan itself; it also steals some of the thunder of Nizām al-Mulk's south dome. Indeed, the latter building was not allowed to dominate the mosque for more than a few months. Moreover, the location of the north dome – as far away as possible from the south dome, while still remaining within the ambit of the mosque – created an alternative focus of attention, and thus inevitably drew some attention away from Nizām al-Mulk's masterpiece. At least part of the purpose behind the north dome – whatever its notional function – was, it seems, that it should act as a spoiling move in relation to the earlier dome.<sup>17</sup>

Three elements are of special relevance in any attempt to explain this enigmatic building. First, the way that it uses the south dome as a model but systematically improves on it point by point; second, the conflicting theories that generations of scholars have proposed in an attempt to determine its likely function, which involve discussing its lack of progeny in subsequent architecture, and the implications of that lack; and third, the evidence of the inscriptions of the two buildings. These issues will now be discussed briefly in turn.

This is not the place for a detailed architectural analysis of a building which has already received a full measure of scholarly attention.<sup>18</sup> But what needs particular stress here is that the north dome is not another free variation on the theme of the Seljuq dome chamber in central Iran – as were the later dome chambers of Gulpāyagān, Barsiyān, Ardistān and Zavāra, all of which, despite their strong family resemblance, possess their own idiosyncrasies. The north dome differs from these successors in its unwavering focus on its immediate model. Schroeder's prescient suggestion that Tāj al-Mulk engaged the master builder of the south dome and told him to do better is an attractive idea.<sup>19</sup> For only that architect himself, or someone very closely connected with the mechanics of the design and construction of the south dome, would know that building from the inside, so to speak, and thus be aware of the weaknesses, or

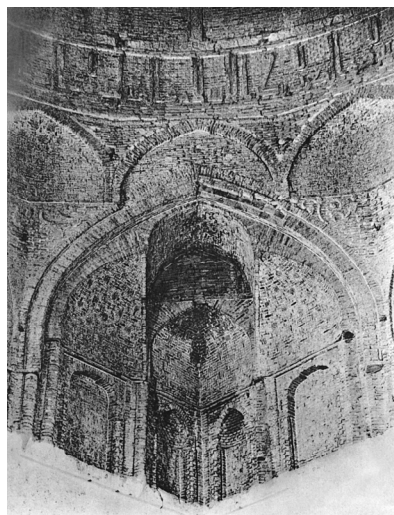
at any rate the scope for improvement, in that design – which was, it seems, revolutionary in Iran at that time (Figures 8.6 and 8.7).<sup>20</sup> And these improvements were made, it seems, without a single important change in the formula. Moreover, they were there to be seen in plain view of the model, a mere 130 metres away. It was a very public lesson that was being administered. It called out for comparisons to be made. Posterity, at least in the twentieth century, has often made those comparisons, and has always voted in favour of the north dome (Figure 8.8). That was surely the intention of its patron.



*Fig. 8.6 Interior elevation of south dome chamber (after Laleh).*

music and architecture; that a photogrammetric survey of the south and north domes carried out in 1974 showed that the south dome revealed many inaccuracies in construction, whereas the north dome was staggeringly accurate, with deviations between the horizontal and vertical elements and their true positions varying between 0.1 and 0.3 per cent; and finally, that a superimposition of one version of ‘Umar Khayyām’s triangle on the photogrammetric section of the north dome reveals startlingly close agreement. It is also plausible enough that scholars and artists exchanged ideas in late eleventh-century Isfahan, as in

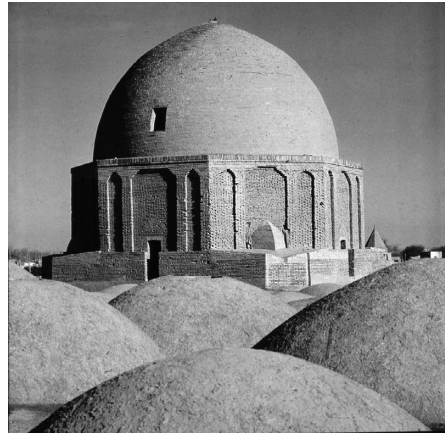
Özdural has devoted much effort to developing a theory that the designer of the north dome was the celebrated mathematician and poet ‘Umar Khayyām. His argument is many-sided and undeniably seductive. Its principal elements are that ‘Umar Khayyām was resident in Isfahan in the 1070s and 1080s; that he enjoyed top-level state support – for his phenomenally accurate calendar was adopted in 1079; that he developed a particular kind of triangle with a rich menu of properties, which extended to practical applications in



*Fig. 8.7 Squinch of south dome chamber (after Pope and Ackerman, Survey).*

other times and places in the medieval Islamic world.<sup>21</sup> But the skills of the theoretical mathematician and the practical architect, while obviously related, are nevertheless sufficiently distinct to exclude the idea that ‘Umar Khayyām was the ‘onlie begetter’ of this masterpiece. On the present evidence, his involvement in the north dome is no more than a fascinating possibility.

So how do the two domes compare in detail? There could be no attempt to outdo the south dome in size; after all, it already occupied the prime site in the mosque, closest to the *qebleh*. In religious terms, it was the focus of attention. And thus the most notable shift in emphasis is that the expansive, sprawling mass of the south dome interior (Figure 8.7) has been disciplined, pared down, into a much-reduced space, with a consequent dramatic increase in vertical impetus and power (Figure 8.9). The



*Fig. 8.8 Exterior view of north dome (after Ettinghausen and Grabar).*

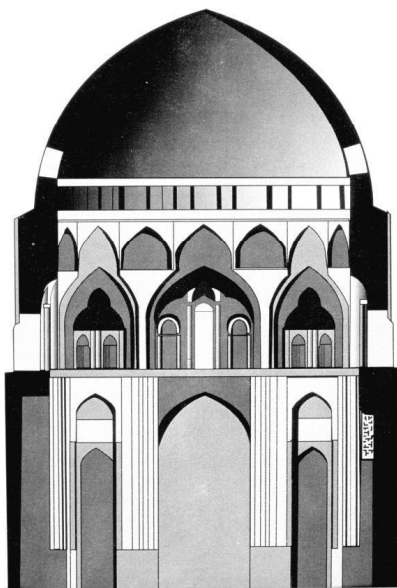


*Fig. 8.9 Interior elevation of north dome chamber (after Seherr-Thoss).*

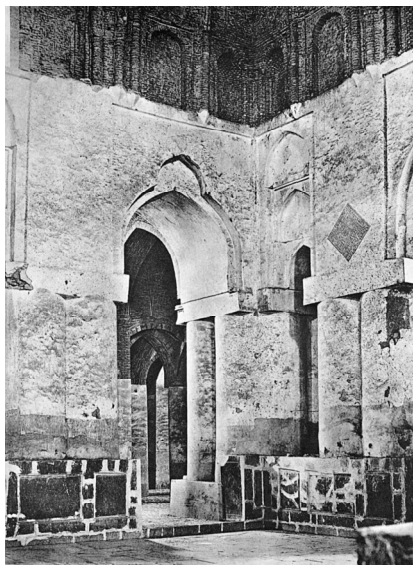
proportions have been refined into a width-to-height ratio of 1:2 – a double cube, in other words, which gives the interior an innate harmony which the south dome, for all its weight and authority, simply lacks (the corresponding ratio there is approximately 1:1.87). Externally, too, as the Italian excavations of the 1970s showed – and of course exterior show was a crucial element in this visual competition set up by Tāj al-Mulk – the north dome scored by virtue of its panels of strong geometrical brick ornamentation below the outer zone of transition.<sup>22</sup> The south dome, in contrast, had an external transition zone of unrelieved austerity.<sup>23</sup> Externally, again, when seen primarily as architecture – i.e. in their upper part,

where there is no applied decoration in either case – the two domes also have a rather different public face. The south dome, for all its absolute height, seems to expand along the horizontal plane, whereas the north dome cleaves smoothly through the lesser domes below, and has an incisive, economical, lean profile, with the contrast between the wider zone of transition and the narrower diameter of the dome gracefully accentuated. A symmetrical array of wide and narrow blank arches, not present in the south dome, enlivens the zone of transition and underlines its innate vertical emphasis (Figure 8.10).

What is the evidence of the two interiors? In the south dome



*Fig. 8.10 Section of north dome chamber (after Schroeder, Survey, pl. 289).*

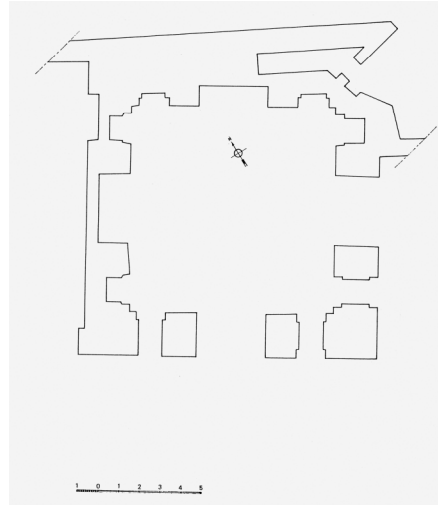


*Fig. 8.11 Lower walls of south dome chamber (after Pope and Ackerman, Survey).*

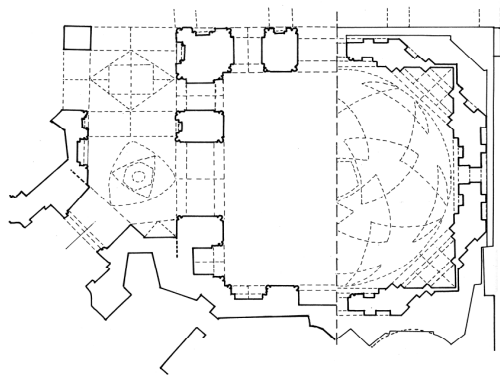
chamber, inserted into the midst of a capacious low covered sanctuary,<sup>24</sup> the need to provide the faithful with easy visual access to the *mihirāb* called for multiple openings (Figure 8.4). Hence the busy, if massive, articulation of the lower walls, which are broken by numerous piers whose engaged columns create a continuously rippling surface (Figure 8.11). These openings, however, are of varying height and width, which prevents the development of an integrated, harmonious lower elevation.<sup>25</sup> No such liturgical need made itself felt in the north dome chamber, and perhaps for that reason its lower walls were designed to match each other as closely as possible, with six actual openings –

three less than the south dome chamber – on the south and east sides; the north and west sides were closed, as the Italian excavations in the 1970s showed (Figures 8.12 and 8.13).<sup>26</sup> These two walls may have formed part of the outer perimeter of the mosque, though internally they were furnished with a further six deep reveals on the north and west sides. And the arrangement of all these openings and indentations is symmetrical: a broad central opening or reveal on each face, flanked by a lesser one to each side of it. Thus true openings are matched by fictive ones.<sup>27</sup> As a result, a satisfying harmony graces the internal elevation. A detailed ground plan made by Schroeder shows this clearly, though it is not entirely to be trusted, since it mistakenly shows the reveals on the north and west sides as openings.<sup>28</sup>

In the zone of transition itself the differences between the two chambers are slight.<sup>29</sup> The prime difference between the two interiors, then, operates below that zone. In the south dome chamber, this lower area is one of diffused emphases, even of confusion, as betrayed by troubling asymmetries. These are all ironed out in the north dome chamber. And the pervasive ponderousness of the south dome chamber, expressed by gargantuan piers, heavy impost blocks and a largely unrelieved *qibleh* wall, is replaced by an interior which seems to have shed superfluous weight at every turn, though without loss of monumentality. Thus the clusters of slim engaged columns, the very



*Fig. 8.12 Plan of north dome (photogrammetric view; after Laleh).*



*Fig. 8.13 Plan of north dome (photogrammetric view; after Laleh).*



essence of verticality and aspiration, are nonetheless anchored at ground level and just above it by solid blocks of masonry. Moreover, at key points – like blank arches and niches – light articulation replaces the blank surfaces so typical of the south dome chamber. This articulation, composed as it is of carved joint plugs and terracotta insets, infuses the wall surfaces with movement and illusionistically lightens their weight. This discreet but nevertheless intense patterning shifts the emphasis of the interior from solidity to delicacy; and it is a feature that is barely exploited at all in the south dome chamber (Figure 8.7). Yet all this decoration – in which glaze plays no part<sup>30</sup> – remains subordinate to the structure itself. Above all, the constituent elements of the north dome chamber – arches, squinches, niches, pilasters – are all integrated and coordinated with each other. The result is a formidable concentration of purpose which propels this dome chamber to the very pinnacle of Seljuq architecture.

It is time to tackle the thorny question of the function of the north dome chamber. Several attempts have been made over the last 60 years to suggest what this might have been. Few of these suggestions have been put forward with any great conviction or, for that matter, with substantial supporting evidence. Gabriel proposed that it was a library or that it sheltered a fountain,<sup>31</sup> and excluded the possibility that it was a mausoleum because its Qur'anic quotations – by which he meant the main inscription on the collar of the dome, Sura 7: 54 – were inappropriate for that function.<sup>32</sup> But the evidence pointing to its being a library boils down to nothing more than Māfarrukhī's comment that in front of the mosque was a library with its rooms and cupboards, built by the *ra'is* Abu'l-'Abbās al-Zubbi.<sup>33</sup> No precise location is given for this library and there is no mention of Tāj al-Mulk, though Yāqut, writing in the early thirteenth century, notes specifically that 'there was a Dar al-Kutub (not a khizana) belonging to Taj al-Mulk in the Great Mosque of Isfahan'.<sup>34</sup> Godard quickly demolished the theory that the building served as a library, and suggested instead that it was intended to serve as a place of prayer for 'un personnage important dont la place à la mosquée n'était cependant pas au premier rang des fidèles'. He then suggested that this was Terken Khātun,<sup>35</sup> a theory later taken up by Pope.<sup>36</sup> The only difficulty here is that she is not mentioned in the inscription,<sup>37</sup> and thus Tāj al-Mulk's putative act of homage to her would have had no public dimension. Besides, marooned at the wrong end of the mosque, if not outside it altogether, in a building with no *mihrāb*, she could neither hear the *khutbeh* nor conveniently participate in worship. These difficulties would apply with equal force to demolish the suggestion that Tāj al-Mulk built the north dome chamber as a *maqsūra* for his own personal use.<sup>38</sup> More recently, Haedeh Laleh, using Zahir al-Din Nishāpuri as her source, has expanded Godard's theory by proposing that there was an organic and functional rapport between the north dome chamber and Terken Khātun's long-vanished *dār al-khilāfa* built for Ja'far, the son of the Caliph al-Muqtadī and grandson of

Malikshāh.<sup>39</sup> What Nishāpuri states in his *Saljūqnāma* is that Terken Khātun and her supporters *intended* (*‘azm dāshtand*) to build this structure in the army *bāzār* in Isfahan,<sup>40</sup> and Rashid al-Dīn, who uses here an Ilkhanid reworking of the same text, concurs.<sup>41</sup> So if this structure was ever built, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that it was near the Friday Mosque.

Sauvaget proposed that the north dome chamber was created for the particular use of the sultan as a place to prepare himself for prayer, change his clothes and hold audience.<sup>42</sup> This must rank as the most rational and convincing attempt to account for the function of the north dome chamber, even though its catch-all nature is a problem.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the absence of royal titles, and indeed of any mention of Malikshāh, in the inscription of the north dome sits rather uneasily with such a specific royal function, especially in view of the abundant emphasis on royal power in the south dome chamber. Moreover, his hypothesis, shared by several other scholars, that the north dome chamber was well outside the then mosque, and totally free-standing, poses a significant practical difficulty, since it would give the sultan – and for that matter anybody using the building – a somewhat pointless 30-metre journey before reaching the mosque proper. The exact degree to which the north dome chamber was outside the mosque remains an open question; one has only to compare the very different sketches of this area made by Sauvaget and Galdieri. It has to be remembered that the area in question is not susceptible to thorough excavation because it was built up after 1088, especially in Mongol times. The mere fact that there are now post-Seljuq structures there says nothing conclusive about the area as it was in 1088. And in the absence of extensive excavation it is harder to prove that a given space was empty than that it was full. It would be prudent, therefore, not to assume too readily that an extensive open space sundered the north dome chamber from the rest of the mosque. Absence of evidence, as Martin Rees memorably remarked, is not evidence of absence. Rather, it seems likely that the north dome chamber was planned from the outset – as indeed is suggested by its idiosyncratic ground plan, with closed north and west sides and open south and east sides<sup>44</sup> – to be integrated with other buildings. Quite possibly its closed sides marked the furthest extension of the mosque to the north<sup>45</sup> and west respectively, while the south side – and possibly the east side too – communicated with other buildings. Nevertheless, the elaborate brick decoration on its south and east sides was clearly meant to be seen (Figure 8.14). In principle, it is clear enough that there would be little point in lavishing complex ornament on external facades which were destined not to be seen. All this suggests that, on these sides at least, the building was free-standing. The putative nearby buildings would therefore not have adjoined these sides directly.

The most detailed survey of the function of the north dome chamber to date has been that of Grabar.<sup>46</sup> He cites Schroeder's suggestion that it was built as an observatory,<sup>47</sup> and Galdieri's comment that some walls to its north, now gone,

suggest the possibility that it was attached to a building extending further in that direction,<sup>48</sup> perhaps as a gate or pavilion connected to this lost built-up area. But while Grabar has created a fuller and more nuanced context for the north dome chamber than his predecessors have been able to do, there still remains in his account a core of uncertainty about what the purpose of the building was.

Whatever the specific local role of the north dome chamber might have been at the northern end of the mosque, the evidence of axiality points unambiguously to its close connection to the south dome chamber. This axiality is the factor which yokes the two structures together and makes it impossible to regard the north dome chamber as an entirely independent creation. Plainly, part of its purpose was intimately connected with the south dome chamber. That same axiality

serves also to articulate the entire length of the mosque, and hence to shift some of the emphasis away from the south dome chamber alone and instead to redistribute it more evenly throughout the mosques in general. Such an axial emphasis became more and more pronounced in the architecture of the mosque from the ninth century onwards, at least partly as an attempt to impose visual control on mosques of increasingly extensive surface area. In the case of the Isfahan *jāmi'*, the effectiveness of this tactic would have depended in large measure on the degree to which the north dome chamber was visible from the rest of the mosque, and especially the courtyard. Presumably in the period before the north *ivān* was built, the north dome was indeed more plainly to be seen,<sup>49</sup> as has been suggested above.

The plethora of contradictory suggestions that have been put forward to explain the function of the north dome chamber – and the discussion so far has not explored other possible, though perhaps less likely, functions for the building, such as a chapel for private prayer and a chamber for ablutions – indicate, if nothing else, that an explanation for it is not to be sought in the standard architecture of the mosque as it developed in Seljuq Iran. The fact that no other Seljuq Iranian mosque has such a dome opposite the *qibla* is indication

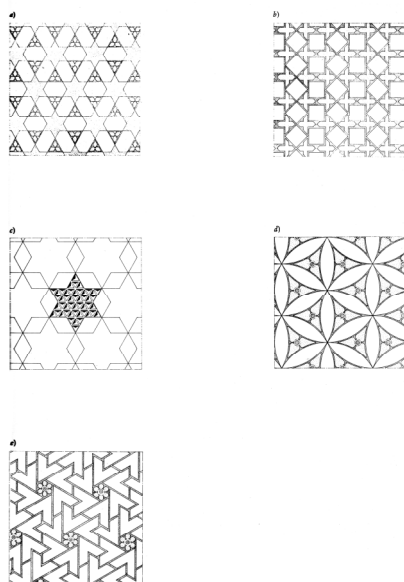


Fig. 8.14 *Decorative details of the exterior south and east sides of the north dome chamber (after Galdieri, Isfahan).*

enough that the north dome represents an idiosyncratic statement. But its uniqueness can be overemphasized and can lead to misunderstanding. The key to its meaning may, in fact, lie less in its form than in its location. To elucidate the significance of that location, a look at some other major *jāmi*'s is required.

Perhaps the best architectural clue to the function of the north dome lies in its system of openings. It is, as we have seen, closed to the north and west, but open to the east and south. The latter opening, incidentally, is absolutely required if the building is to be integrated with the rest of the mosque. The opening to the east, then, makes best sense as a formal access point to the mosque from the city which encircled it on all sides. In the interpretation presented here, in other words, the north dome was built to mark a major formal point of entry – perhaps, indeed, *the* major entrance – to the mosque. Naturally, in a mosque as large as the Isfahan *jāmi*, and one as engulfed in its bazaar setting as was this one, there would need to be multiple entries. But the need for a principal and formal, not to say ceremonial, entrance would remain. Why not, it may be asked, place such an entrance somewhere on the flank of the mosque, as indeed became standard practice for monumental entrances in later mosques?<sup>50</sup> The obvious answer lies in the political rivalry between the two viziers, and the way that this spilled over into architecture. For Tāj al-Mulk, the best place for his dome chamber would have been directly opposite the newly created liturgical focus of the mosque, namely the south dome chamber. That way, his personal challenge to the old vizier's achievement would be most unmistakable. And there is more. The fact that the radical redesign of the mosque undertaken by Nizām al-Mulk did not contain another major dome chamber shows clearly enough that there was no functional imperative for such a structure. And the speed with which it was built – with the mortar hardly dry on the south dome – reveals unmistakably that its construction was a knee-jerk reaction by Tāj al-Mulk to the old vizier's masterstroke. That in turn suggests that the younger vizier built the north dome for himself, primarily as an expression of his own power and importance.<sup>51</sup> Any further and practical function for it would thus have been secondary. And the most obvious such function is that it served as a new entrance to the mosque from the north side.

The spirit of emulation which motivated Tāj al-Mulk explains why, exceptionally, this entrance was marked by a dome chamber. In later buildings *ivāns* – perhaps a borrowing from palatial architecture – served as major entrances to mosques, and their cavernous open spaces underlined that function very effectively, seeming to welcome worshippers into the mosque. Certainly the need for a major entrance remained even if its architectural expression was subject to change. The Jurjir mosque facade affords useful proof that this role of the *ivān* was already known in Isfahan before the Seljuq period,<sup>52</sup> and of course it continued in Seljuq and later times, as is shown at Nakhchivān<sup>53</sup> and the Masjid-i Imām Hasan at Ardistan,<sup>54</sup> as well as numerous Ilkhanid

buildings.<sup>55</sup> Conversely, the idea of using a dome chamber as an entrance is found in Islamic secular architecture as early as Khirbat al-Mafjar (where it occurs twice),<sup>56</sup> perhaps 'Ammān,<sup>57</sup> Baghdad,<sup>58</sup> and the *ribāt* at Susa<sup>59</sup> – while in the context of a mosque one may point to the use of a monumental vaulted portal on the axis of the *mihṛāb* in the mosque of Mahdiyya<sup>60</sup> and that of al-Hākīm in Cairo,<sup>61</sup> and the mosque of Qairawān<sup>62</sup> (to cite only one of several Maghribī examples),<sup>63</sup> and those of Samarra<sup>64</sup> and Abu Dulaf,<sup>65</sup> used the minaret (or tower) for this purpose.

The north dome chamber at Isfahan therefore fits into an established tradition of accentuating the axis perpendicular to the *mihṛāb*, and is original merely in that it employs a dome chamber, long familiar in this role in secular contexts, to achieve this end. The choice of a dome chamber was very likely conditioned, as suggested above, by the presence of a spectacular new dome chamber at the south end of the mosque, and by the patron's personal need to outshine that monument. In many later mosques it became standard practice to combine an *ivān* with a domed or vaulted chamber directly behind it, and this formula became a standard means of depicting an entrance complex.<sup>66</sup> Seen in this light, the north dome chamber loses much of its mystery. Its precise form is somewhat unexpected for an entrance, and the fact that its northern wall, the furthest extension of the mosque in that direction, is unbroken by any opening is noticeable, and frankly strange. But there are two lateral openings on both the east and the west side of the building, making a total of four on those sides, so access to the mosque via this monumental structure would have been easy. Moreover, there was no shortage of precedents for mosque entrances in which domes played a part, and in the recent late-eleventh-century context of the use of large dome chambers as an expression of political power, this particular architectural form had acquired contemporary significance. And in some later mosques, too, an entrance was placed – exactly like the north dome chamber – on the chord of the mosque, directly opposite the *mehṛāb*.<sup>67</sup>

It is not now possible to recapture the original setting of the north dome chamber. The subsequent erection of the north *ivān* has tended visually to draw the north dome chamber into the courtyard, and thus into the interior of the mosque, and to diminish the sense that the chamber looks outwards as well as inwards. It is difficult to imagine away the north *ivān* and the other structures between and around it and the north dome chamber. It is a great pity that the Italian excavations did not tackle the entrance *ivān* to the extreme north-west extension of the mosque, within a few metres of the north dome. It was given an outer facing of glazed tilework in the Muzaffarid period, and indeed is dated 768 (1366), and Godard's description assumes that this gate was built at that time, along with what he terms the northern quincunx – the area between the north dome and the north *ivān*.<sup>68</sup> But this portal is perfectly located to have been constructed in tandem with the north dome, and may incorporate Seljuq elements or have been constructed on their remains. Equally, the Muzaffarid

extension might have been prompted in part by a desire to 'tidy up' the mosque by incorporating the north dome more fully into it. Only excavation could resolve this issue.

In the event, there was a Seljuq gate built to the north of the mosque, though it is some distance from the north dome and cannot be regarded as having any close connection with it. It bears the name of Sultan Sanjar and the date 515 (1121–2), and was thus added to the mosque in the immediate aftermath of its burning by the Isma'ilis in 1121.<sup>69</sup> This is still to this day the most public and formal entrance to the mosque. And it exploits precisely the openness of the building on its east side. It is a pity that the Italian excavations did not tackle this area either, for that gate may of course be a reconstruction, or a replacement of a destroyed or damaged gate, rather than a brand new structure on an open site. In other words, Sultan Sanjar's gate may reflect an already existing link between the north dome chamber and this formal entrance *ivān*.

There is another sense in which the subsequent, post-Seljuq evolution of the Isfahan mosque has obscured the function of the north dome chamber. Over the centuries, the mosque acquired numerous secondary entrances, and these gradually usurped the role of the north dome chamber. Indeed, that particular access to the mosque involves the worshipper in what is physically the longest, and thus the least practical, approach to the sanctuary. Too little is known about the configuration of the city of Isfahan in the late eleventh century to be able to relate the north dome chamber to, say, the location of the Seljuq royal palace or even to the main arteries of the city, and thus to say whether it was as inconvenient an entrance in its own day as it is now. But if the north dome chamber were indeed intended to function as the major entrance to the mosque, it would have made good sense to channel most worshippers through this particular entrance.

And so to the inscriptions: from the point of view of the patron, Tāj al-Mulk, the function of the north dome chamber as the major public entrance to the mosque would yield obvious political dividends. His munificence would be permanently in the public eye, attested by an inscription which named him as the patron – perhaps the absence of any reference to the treasurer mentioned in the south dome inscription can be taken to mean that Tāj al-Mulk paid for his building from his private purse and not from the public one.<sup>70</sup> And the reference to his patronage was encompassed by Qur'anic inscriptions, of which the most significant in size and location (at the base of the dome) is 7: 54, which in sonorous language exalts God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars. Immediately after these stirring words comes the identification of Tāj al-Mulk as the patron, followed by the petition that his life should end well, and then the date. Just below this band, nestling in the spandrels of the 16-sided zone of transition, are 32 of the 99 Beautiful Names of God. The sequence of these august epithets was repeated by pious Muslims, often with the aid of a rosary, as a devotional exercise;<sup>71</sup> this is perhaps the

earliest occurrence of these names in the monumental epigraphy of Iran. It may not be irrelevant that the very same period saw al-Ghazālī, the star of the Khurāsānī intellectual elite that flourished under the patronage of Nizām al-Mulk, writing his book on the 99 Names.<sup>72</sup> In an epigraphic tour de force, all 99 Names occur, among several other inscriptions, as a frame in a brick panel of uncertain date, which Grabar places ‘certainly earlier than the fourteenth century’, in the east *ivān*.<sup>73</sup> The idea was apparently taken up with enthusiasm in the Timurid and Safavid periods.<sup>74</sup> The repetition of these names could have hypnotic force, but that would obviously not work if the inscriptions were placed too high to be visible to the naked eye.

The north dome has three further Qur’anic inscriptions, and these underline the lofty and poetic tone of the main band at the base of the dome. Further down, the second inscription is subservient to the main articulation of the lower walls of the chamber, for it is found at the base of the hood of each tall niche, and is therefore broken up. But the letters are large and legible. The text, Sura 17: 78–9,<sup>75</sup> mentions vigils and supererogatory prayers in the context of sunset, the night and the dawn. The third inscription, Sura 3: 26–7,<sup>76</sup> in the soffit of the arch that marks the southern entrance to the chamber, again mentions day and night, this time in the context of God’s supreme authority and His power alike to exalt and abase. Finally a brief text crowning a niche on the eastern/southeastern exterior wall states (Sura 3: 97) that ‘whosoever enters it is in security’;<sup>77</sup> the location suggests that the dome chamber is meant,<sup>78</sup> though the context of the verse itself is the temple of Ibrāhīm/Abraham in Bakka/Mecca, namely the Ka’ba: a source, to quote the words immediately preceding this quotation, of ‘guidance unto all the worlds, full of clear messages’.

What is one to make of this idiosyncratic choice of Qur’anic quotations?<sup>79</sup> The message that is hammered home is that the authority of God is supreme – note, for example, the fourfold repetition of the root *m.l.k.* in the opening line of 3: 26. That authority extends over the heavens and the earth, day and night, sun, moon and stars. Man’s first duty is to worship God, day and night. God alone decrees who shall exercise dominion, who shall be exalted and who shall be abased. Sermons in brick, then, if not in stone. Altogether, this was a building which, through the medium of its inscriptions, radiates piety rather than pomp. It reminds whoever reads and ponders these inscriptions to reverence what is eternal as distinct from what is transient – such as that worldly power that is exalted at length in the main inscription of the south dome. Thus a stark contrast is set up between the temporary and the permanent, between this world and the next, between the dues of Caesar and the dues of God.

It is even conceivable that the decoration was planned with the main Qur’anic inscription in mind. That inscription (Sura 7: 54) mentions the sun, the moon and the stars, as well as the heavens. Stellar designs in the form of plugs and terracotta insets<sup>80</sup> festoon the interior of the building, and in the interior of the dome in particular, which is cast in a permanent penumbra, they

are executed in white, which makes them stand out boldly – like stars – against the dark brick. The light-coloured brick at the centre of the dome suggests that there was earlier an oculus here, which on account of its circular shape and its function as a source of light is an obvious figure for the sun. Surrounding it, and dominating the entire underside of the dome, is an elaborate ribbed geometrical configuration based on a pentangle, which creates an absolute constellation of stars in many different sizes, evoking the Milky Way (Figure 8.15).<sup>81</sup> There may even be some magical intent here. No trace of any similar design has been detected on the underside of the south dome; here again, then, is an example of how the later building outshines its predecessor.

One further point may be made: the notable absence of any reference to the reigning sultan, Malikshāh, in the main inscription – or, for that matter, in any of the subsidiary ones.<sup>82</sup> And yet the corresponding inscription in the south dome chamber uses most of its length to give the titles of the ruler. The absence of such content in the north dome inscription is nothing short of astonishing, given the allegedly close



*Fig. 8.15 Underside of the north dome (after Seherr-Thoss).*

relationship between Malikshāh and Tāj al-Mulk at this time. Was there collusion between them in the attempt to rile Nizām al-Mulk by building the north dome as a rival to his own dome? Was Tāj al-Mulk presuming a little on his favoured status? But perhaps, after all, if that were the case, the monarch could not reasonably take offence, for whereas Nizām al-Mulk in the south dome gives the glory to Malikshāh,<sup>83</sup> Tāj al-Mulk in the north dome gives the glory to God. The contrast is pointed. And the latter inscription focuses precisely on the all-embracing power and authority of God – a theme which could be thought to point a sharp contrast to the content of the south dome inscription, with its orchestrated exaltation of the power and authority of the sultan. The overriding message of the north dome inscription is, as we have seen, one of piety; whether it also conceals political animus is hard to tell. And in any case, it is hard to shake off the suspicion that, beneath the ringing proclamations of loyalty and piety which these two inscriptions broadcast, self-interest reigns supreme. At all events, while the very public sycophancy of Nizām al-Mulk may well have helped to buy him an extra five years of power, the very public piety of Tāj al-Mulk availed him little. By a sad irony, his



prayer – inserted at the end of the great inscription round the collar of the north dome – that his life should end well was destined not to be fulfilled. It ended badly: he was hacked to pieces by the *mamluks* of Nizām al-Mulk. It is a sobering commentary on the vanity of human wishes.

## Notes:

1. Cases like the mosque of Bibi Khānum in Samarqand, where dome chambers face each other across a subsidiary axis (L. Golombek and D. N. Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan* [Princeton, 1988], Fig. 26), illustrate a very different concept, in which it is not competition but the ideal of symmetry that is paramount.
2. The phrase is Ernst Herzfeld's: see his 'Arabische Inschriften aus Iran und Syrien', *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 8 (1936), p. 86.
3. It is just conceivable that this title ('crown of the state') was intended to trump that of the elder statesman, Nizām al-Mulk ('maintainer of the state'). The *laqab* of Tāj al-Mulk, al-Qummī, suggests that he did not belong to the Khurāsānī bureaucratic elite (the word mafia comes to mind) which Nizām al-Mulk fostered and controlled. For a detailed discussion of Tāj al-Mulk, see D. Durand-Guédy, 'Un fragment inédit de la chronique des Saljuquides de 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani: le chapitre sur Tağ al-Mulk', *Annales Islamologiques* 39 (2005), pp. 205–22.
4. *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary*, transl. Baron M. de Slane (Paris, 1843), III, p. 153.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 150–1; Ibn al-Habbāriyya likened the court of Tāj al-Mulk to a garden whose beauty he wished to last for ever, and allusively compared himself to a cooing ring-dove in it (*ibid.*, p. 152). Safi has detected various gibes directed at Tāj al-Mulk in Nizām al-Mulk's *Sayāsāt-nāma* (O. Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* [Chapel Hill, NC, 2006], pp. 69–70); cf. D. Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers: A History of Isfahan in the Saljuq Period* (Abingdon and New York, 2010), pp. 114–15, 145.
6. But this poet, who was noted for his unbridled tongue and pen, seems to have been afflicted with a death-wish, for he wrote 'a poem in which he expressed his rancour against all the important persons of the time' (the caliph, Malikshāh, Nizām al-Mulk and Tāj al-Mulk), and had to leave Isfahan (C. Pellat, 'Ibn al-Habbāriyya', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, III, 774b).
7. De Slane, *Ibn Khallikan's*, I, p. 415.
8. For the background, see C. Hillenbrand, '1092: A Murderous Year', in A. Fodor, ed., *Proceedings of the 14th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, Part Two*, The Arabist: Budapest Studies in Arabic 15–16 (Budapest, 1995), pp. 281–96.
9. The madrasa that Tāj al-Mulk founded in Baghdad (C. L. Klausner, *The Seljuk Vizierate: A Study of Civil Administration 1055–1194* [Cambridge, MA, 1973], p. 72) was an early example of this emulation, for it was in Baghdad that the most famous of Nizām al-Mulk's Nizāmiyyas was to be found, and it is intriguing to note that the name of Tāj al-Mulk's madrasa was the Tājiyya – so that its name, presumably on the model of Nizām al-Mulk's Nezāmiyya, was based on the vizier's *laqab*. Both madrasas served the Shafī'ite *madhhab* alone (G. Makdisi, 'Les rapports entre calife et sultan à l'époque saljuqide', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6: 2 [1975], p. 234, quoting Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi). And in the winter of 1091 – the sources give the *hijrī* year as 484 or 485 – Malikshāh, Nizām al-Mulk and Tāj al-Mulk all built palaces for themselves in Baghdad, while Terken Khātun founded a mint there (G. Makdisi, 'The Topography of Eleventh Century Bagdad: Materials and Notes (II)', *Arabica* 6 [1959], p. 292; cf. R. Levy, *A Baghdad Chronicle* [Cambridge, 1929], p. 204). This flurry of building activity in the 'Abbasid capital by the main political players in the Seljuq state at that time, following as it did hard on the heels of the spectacular transformation of the Friday

Mosque in Isfahan, the then Seljuq capital, suggests that major political developments were afoot.

10. S. S. Blair has deduced, on the basis of the protocols of the foundation inscription of this dome chamber, that the building was erected in the winter of 1086–7 – see her ‘Surveyor versus Epigrapher’, *Muqarnas* 8 (1991), pp. 70–1. Slightly later she refined the suggested date to Dhu’l-Hejja 479 (March 1087) (*The Monumental Inscriptions from Early Islamic Iran and Transoxiana*, Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture. Supplements to *Muqarnas*, Volume V [Leiden/New York/København/Köln, 1992], p. 162). For a close analysis of the two key Damascus inscriptions of this time, see Makdisi, ‘Les rapports’, pp. 231–2.
11. H. Laleh, *La structure fondamentale des arcs dans l’architecture saldjukide de l’Iran*, Thèse de doctorat d’Université de Paris Sorbonne (Paris IV) (Paris, 1989), I, p. 402. The corresponding figures for the north dome are a diameter of between 9.8 and 10.0 metres and a height of 20.6 metres (*ibid.*).
12. B. Finster, ‘The Saljuqs as Patrons’, in R. Hillenbrand, ed., *The Art of the Saljuqs in Iran and Anatolia: Proceedings of a Symposium held in Edinburgh in 1982* (Costa Mesa, CA, 1994), p. 19.
13. For example, at the Aqsā mosque in Jerusalem; the Umayyad mosque in Damascus; the mosque of al-Hākīm in Cairo; the Aghlabid mosque at Qairawān; and the Umayyad mosque at Cordoba. The visual impact of these domes is best appreciated via three-dimensional drawings; see R. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (rev. edn, Edinburgh, 2000), figs. 2.76, 2.70, 2.94, 2.143, 2.79.
14. Cf. K. Salameh, ‘A New Saljuq Inscription in the Masjid al-Aqsa, Jerusalem’, *Levant* 41: 1 (2009), p. 116; here too, in an inscription dated 476 (1083–4) or 477 (1084–5), Nizām al-Mulk apparently (the inscription is badly damaged) does not give himself the same amount of space as the caliph and the local Turkish ruler, Tutush, the brother of Malikshāh.
15. A. U. Pope, ‘Note on the Aesthetic Character of the North Dome of the Masjid-i-Jami’ of Isfahan’, in *Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture In Honour of Professor K. A. C. Creswell* (Cairo, 1965), p. 180.
16. A. U. Pope and P. Ackerman, eds, *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present* (London and New York, 1938–39), caption to pl. 273.
17. An obvious question to ask is why Tāj al-Mulk did not build a dome larger than the south dome. But the answer is equally obvious: the prime location of politico-religious significance had already been taken by the south dome, and it would have been quite inappropriate on both religious and political grounds to have a dome of similar or larger size anywhere else in the mosque. As Grabar puts it, in the context of the mosque as a whole ‘the only unusual contribution [of central authority] was to have brought the north dome into a mosque scheme which did not need it’.
18. See notably R. Byron, *The Road to Oxiana* (London, 1950), p. 175; E. Schroeder in Pope and Ackerman, *Survey*, pp. 1004–9; Pope, ‘Note on the Aesthetic Character of the North Dome’; E. Galdieri, *Isfahan: Masḡid-i Ġum’a*, (Rome, 1972), p. 372, and *Isfahan: Masḡid-i Ġum’a*, III (Rome, 1984), pp. 25–9; Laleh, *La structure fondamentale* I, pp. 176–219; II, Figs 35–76; III, pp. 83–140; and O. Grabar, *The Great Mosque of Isfahan* (London, 1990), pp. 38–40, 50–4. In more speculative vein, see A. Özdural, ‘A Mathematical Sonata for Architecture: Umar Khayyam and the Friday Mosque of Isfahan’, *Technology and Culture* 39: 4, pp. 699–715, in which the author pays tribute to Oleg Grabar, ‘who kindly drew [his] attention to the possibility that Umar Khayyam was the conceptual designer of the North Dome Chamber’, but on p. 699 also notes, ‘Grabar reports Schroeder’s argument that since its proportions were derived from the golden section and the poet and mathematician

- Umar Khayyam at that very time had identified properties of the pentagon, he might have been the designer'. Özdural then notes that 'Schroeder's syllogism is based on inaccurate information: accurately surveyed dimensions of the North Dome show his proportions to have only rough approximations'. For a similar criticism of Schroeder's measurements, see Laleh, *La structure fondamentale*, I, p. 218 n. 16.
19. Pope and Ackerman, *Survey*, 1005, fn. For the parallel provided by the two Kharraqān towers, both built by the same architect, and where the later building systematically improves on the earlier one, see R. Hillenbrand, 'Architecture', in R. W. Ferrier, ed., *The Arts of Persia* (New Haven/London, 1989), p. 319 n. 24.
  20. Sheila Blair suggests that the Saljuq dome in the Damascus mosque, erected in 1081 and widely admired, was the immediate source of inspiration ('Surveyor versus Epigrapher', p. 70). This may be true. But even so, the Syrian dome was of stone and it would have required some major rethinking to reproduce its ideas in the very different medium of brick. Nor was it as big as the Isfahan south dome. The prestige of Baghdad – where brick buildings were the norm – was still high at this time, moreover, and perhaps major official structures in that city had their effect on the Isfahan design too.
  21. A. Özdural, 'Umar Khayyam, Mathematicians, and *Conversazione* with Artisans', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 54 (1995), pp. 54–71; and 'On Interlocking Similar or Corresponding Figures and Ornamental Patterns of Cubic Equations', *Muqarnas* 13 (1996), pp. 192–3.
  22. Galdieri, *Isfahan*, III, p. 28, Figs 23 and 24, and plates 38–40.
  23. Pope and Ackerman, *Survey*, plate 275.
  24. E. Galdieri, 'Quelques précisions sur le Gunbad-e Nizam al-Mulk d'Isfahan', *Revue des études islamiques* 43 (1975), pp 97–122.
  25. A. Godard, 'Historique du Masjid-i Djum'a d'Isfahan', *Athar-é Iran* 1: 2 (1936), Fig. 146.
  26. Galdieri, *Isfahan*, pp. 26–7. See his analytical drawing (mis-captioned as depicting the south dome), in *ibid.*, p. 108, Fig. 22.
  27. The plan in A. Gabriel, 'Le Masjid-i Djum'a d'Isfahan', *Ars Islamica* II (1935), Fig. 13 (which is published in reverse), suggests that at the time of his visit there was only a single opening, namely on the north-east side, giving easy access to the nearby gate with an inscription of 766 (1368), and that three earlier openings on the east side had been blocked. Frustratingly, Galdieri's three volumes on the mosque do not contain a complete, up-to-date ground plan, but he does publish a two-level plan (*Isfahan*, p. 108, Fig. 22), of which half represents a plan at 9 metres above the datum while the other half represents a plan at 1.5 metres above the datum. This latter half, showing half of the north and south sides and all of the east side, indicates a closed north side, two openings on the east side and a further two (out of an actual three) on the south side. Gabriel's plan of the north dome should thus be discarded.
  28. See Pope and Ackerman, *Survey*, p. 1006, Fig. 346. This very detailed plan, presumably intended as a reconstruction of its original layout, shows four identical, and identically open, sides – Galdieri likens it to a *chahār tāq* (*Isfahan*, p. 25). Yet Schroeder's plan of this same chamber in his master plan of the entire mosque shows the north wall as unbroken by any openings (Pope and Ackerman, *Survey*, Fig. 328). Schroeder's text (*ibid.*, pp. 1004–9), though still far and away the most penetrating account of this masterpiece, makes no allusion to this crucial discrepancy.

29. Note, however, that the device of giving a pointed, shouldered profile to the top lobe of the trilobed squinches and arches of this zone in the south dome chamber, and the way that this arch intrudes to take up half the space of the corresponding arch in the hexadecagon above (Pope and Ackerman, *Survey*, plate 288), is much toned down in the north dome chamber. Here the boundary between octagon and hexadecagon is only slightly transgressed (*ibid.*, plate 290).
30. See A. U. Pope and M. Minovi, 'Notes on Nizam al-Mulk as a patron of building', *Bulletin of the American Institute for Iranian Art and Archaeology* 5: 3 (1938), pp. 244–5, in which an admittedly late source – the early-fourteenth-century account in Hindushāh's *Tajārib al-salaf* of the building of the Nezāmiyya madrasa in Baghdad in 459 (1067) – contains two interesting nuggets of information that shed some light on the vizier's attitude to architecture. First, he is reported as having had in mind as suitable models for his madrasa the eighth-century mosque of al-Mansur in Baghdad and the tenth-century hospital of 'Azud al-Dawleh, 'for I have heard that they used one wicker basket of mortar for every brick'; this is, of course, a truly absurd statement, but beneath the hyperbole one can detect a preference for solidity and strength as the most desirable feature in these buildings. Second, the vizier is reported to have said, 'I was told that you [the supervisor of works, 'Abu Sayyid Ahmad ibn Muhammad, a Sufi from Nishapur] spent the money for the building on enamelled bricks and I am afraid that it may soon collapse'. This suggests not only that the use of glaze for decorative purposes in architecture was already well established at this time, but also that Nizām al-Mulk was not enamoured of this fashion.
31. Godard, 'Historique du Masdjid-i Djum'a', pp. 25 and 42.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 25. Quotations from the Qur'an in this paper use the numbering of the Cairo edition, not of the edition used by G. Fluegel in his *Concordantiae Corani Arabicae* (Leipzig, 1842), which for this quotation is 7: 52. Given the extraordinarily wide range of Qur'anic quotations found on funerary buildings, and given too the Saljuq propensity to add *turbas* to religious buildings, Gabriel's is a rather cavalier dismissal of a serious possibility. The inscription round the collar of the dome contains a wish that Tāj al-Mulk might end (his life) well, a sentiment perfectly in accord with a funerary function. Byron likens the north dome chamber to a tomb tower within the mosque (*Road to Oxiana*, p. 175). And four of the seven occurrences of this text recorded in E. C. Dodd and S. Khairallah, *The Image of the Word: A Study of Quranic Verses in Islamic Architecture*, II (Beirut, 1981), p. 41, are to be found in a funerary context. In view of all this, it would be prudent not to discard outright the possibility that the north dome chamber was intended as the mausoleum of Tāj al-Mulk, even if – as will be seen later – the building makes better sense as an instrument of self-aggrandizement and, to the degree that it was intended also to have a practical use, is most likely to have functioned as an entrance pavilion to the mosque.
33. Gabriel, 'Le Masdjid-i Djum'a d'Isfahan', p. 38. The name should be al-Zabbi.
34. G. Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh, 1981), p. 25.
35. Godard, 'Historique du Masdjid-i Djum'a', pp. 224, 226.
36. Pope, 'Note on the Aesthetic Character of the North Dome', p. 190.

37. And the cases of Ribāt-e Sharaf (A. Godard, 'Khorasan', *Athar* 4: 1 [1949], p. 13) and Shāh-i Mashhad (M. J. Casimir and B. Glatzer, 'Šah-i Mašhad, a Recently Discovered Madrasah of the Ghurid Period in Garġistan (Afghanistan)', *East and West* N.S. 21 [1971], p. 56), to say nothing of numerous Rum Saljuq foundations in Anatolia, show that women of rank were acknowledged epigraphically as patronesses in Saljuq times (for mausolea, see U. U. Bates, *The Anatolian Mausoleum of the Twelfth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, unpublished PhD dissertation [University of Michigan, 1970], p. 481; for caravanserais, see K. Erdman and H. Erdmann, *Das Anatolische Karavansaray des 13. Jahrhunderts. Teil II und III* [Berlin, 1976], p. 58). The case of the Gunbād-i 'Ali at Abarquh, one of whose tenants was a woman, is perhaps the closest example in time and space to the north dome chamber at Isfahan (A. Godard, 'Abarkuh (Province de Yazd)', *Athar* 1: 1 [1936], p. 50). For a summary of the context and the issues involved, see C. Hillenbrand, 'Women in the Seljuq Period', in G. Nashat and L. Beck, eds, *Women in Iran From the Rise of Islam to 1800* (Urbana, IL, 2003), pp. 103–20.
38. Cf. J. Sauvaget, 'Observations sur quelques mosquées seldjoukides', *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université d'Alger* IV (1938), pp. 88–9. Sheila Blair goes slightly further in suggesting that it was here that the sovereign exercised his duties as *nāzir fi'l-mazālim* (*Monumental Inscriptions*, p. 166).
39. Laleh, *La structure fondamentale*, I, pp. 178–9.
40. A. H. Morton, ed., *The Saljuqnama of Zahir al-Din Nishapuri* (Chippenhams, 2004), pp. 35–6.
41. C. E. Bosworth, ed., *The History of the Seljuq Turks From the Jami' al-Tawarikh: An Ilkhanid Adaptation of the Saljuq-nama of Zahir al-din Nishapuri*, transl. and annotated by K. A. Luther (Richmond, 2001), p. 65.
42. Sauvaget, 'Observations sur quelques mosquées seldjoukides', p. 89, with the additional suggestion that the Qur'anic inscription of the north dome was selected specifically for its references to concepts such as 'throne' and 'government'. Sauvaget's comments should be seen in the context of the rest of his article – an attempt to account for the sudden popularity of great domed chambers in the Saljuq architecture of Iran. For a commentary on this issue, see J. Sourdell-Thomine, 'Retour aux pavillons à coupole des mosquées Seldjoukides [*sic*] en Iran', in B. M. Alfieri and U. Scerrato, eds, *Studi in Onore di Ugo Monneret de Villard (1881–1954), II: Il Mondo Islamico, Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, LIX (1985, pub. 1987), pp. 307–13, esp. pp. 310, 312. See also Finster, 'The Saljuqs as Patrons', p. 19; and Blair, *Monumental Inscriptions*, p. 166.
43. One might compare the Bāb Lālla Raihāna at Qairawān, which has been similarly interpreted as a stage in the ruler's processional way to the *mihrāb*. This is of course much later in date (1296), and geographically remote from Isfahan, but it does show that a royal entrance pavilion of this type was known elsewhere (G. Marçais, *L'architecture musulmane d'Occident: Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc, Espagne et Sicile* [Paris, 1955], p. 295 and Fig. 184).
44. These are, incidentally, only rough compass points.
45. But see the discovery by Galdieri mentioned in Grabar, *Great Mosque*, p. 38.
46. Grabar, *Great Mosque*, pp. 38–40, 50–4.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 84. Presumably he had in mind a connection with 'Umar Khayyām. This hypothesis is also favoured in Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites*, p. 93 n. 111. Yet it is hard to see how the form of the north dome could fulfil the functions of an observatory. The remains of other medieval observatories in the Iranian world, at Marāgha and Samarkand, show a totally different layout.

48. Grabar, *Great Mosque*, pp. 38, 50. Galdieri himself argues strongly in favour of the proposition that the north dome chamber was merely part of a larger complex of buildings on the north side of the mosque (*Isfahan*, pp. 26–8).
49. But compare Galdieri's assertion that the north dome chamber 'was partly hidden from view despite its axial position, possibly for the purpose of some precise ceremonial function' (ibid., p. 27). This function is not specified, and, above all, the closing wall which blocked off this south facade of the north dome chamber from the rest of the mosque is not given a date. The exact degree of visibility of the north dome chamber in its own time remains, therefore, an open question. In the absence of clear contemporary evidence to the contrary, it seems justified to conclude that the externally decorated south facade at least – and probably the east facade too, which also bore external decoration – was intended to be visible. It was after all a logical corollary of Tāj al-Mulk's desire to outdo the dome chamber of Nizām al-Mulk that his own dome chamber should be no less visible. Moreover, since it was so much smaller, the presence of external decoration was all the more important.
50. Such as the Friday Mosque of Nā'in (Pope and Ackerman, *Survey*, Fig. 315); the Masjid-i Buzurg, Gaz (D. N. Wilber, *The Architecture of Islamic Iran: The Il Khanid Period* [Princeton, 1955], Fig. 29); the Masjid-i Jāmi', Marand (ibid., Fig. 47) and the Masjid-i Gunbād, Āzādān (ibid., Fig. 58). The same phenomenon may be noted at shrines, as at Pīr-i Bakrān (Pope and Ackerman, *Survey*, Fig. 387) and Bastām (ibid., Fig. 388).
51. See also Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites*, p. 93.
52. R. Hillenbrand, 'Abbasid Mosques in Iran', in Alfieri and Scerrato, *Studi*, pp. 177–87; B. Finster, *Frühe Iranische Moscheen. Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran. Ergänzungsband*, XIX (Berlin, 1994), pp. 198–200.
53. J. Dieulafoy, *La Tour du Monde. La Perse, la Chaldée et la Susiane* (Paris, 1887), p. 9.
54. A. M. Hutt, *The Development of the Minaret in Iran under the Saljuqs*, unpublished M.Phil thesis (University of London, 1974), II, Fig. 16.
55. Such as the Friday Mosque of Ashtarjān (Wilber, *Architecture of Islamic Iran*, Fig. 26), the Friday Mosque of Farumād (ibid., Fig. 39) and the Masjid-i Jadid at Turbet-i Jām (ibid., Fig. 52).
56. R. W. Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar: An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley* (Oxford, 1959), plates CI (the palace) and CVII (the bath hall).
57. A. A. Gorbea, *El Palacio Omeya de Amman. I. La Arquitectura* (Madrid, 1983), pp. 60–73, 81–7 and Figs 9–13. A. Northedge, however, in his book *Studies on Roman and Islamic 'Amman: The Excavations of Mrs C-M Bennett and Other Investigations, Volume I: History, Site and Architecture*, British Academy Monographs on Archaeology No. 3 (Oxford, 1992), Fig. 41, reconstructs the building with an open central courtyard.
58. K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture, II: Early 'Abbāsids. Umayyads of Cordova. Aghlabids, Tulunids, and Sāmānids. AD 751–905* (Oxford, 1940), pp. 12–15, Figs 3–5.
59. Ibid., p. 168, Fig. 155.
60. K. A. C. Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt. Volume I: Ikshids and Fātimids. AD 939–1171* (Oxford, 1952), pp. 5, 8, and plate 1b; J. M. Bloom, *Minaret: Symbol of Islam. Oxford Studies in Islamic Art VII* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 100–2.

61. Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, pp. 8, 68–72, Fig. 44 and plates 15–17. It is worth noting that, in his reconstruction of the Fātimid Azhar Mosque, Bloom adds a projecting portal (*Minaret*, p. 130, Fig. 75); Creswell's reconstruction (*Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, p. 59, Fig. 21) shows an entrance directly opposite the *qibla* but flush with the adjoining walls.
62. Bloom, *Minaret*, p. 91.
63. For example, the mosques of Sfax, the Qal'eh of the Banu Hammād, Tlemcen and Rabāt (ibid., Figs 40, 56–7, and p.113; Figs 61 and 70, and pp.123–4, respectively).
64. Creswell, *EMA*, pp. 259–61, Figs 205–7 and plate 63.
65. Ibid., pp. 281–2, Fig. 223, and plate 71e.
66. For example, the shrine of Shaykh Safi at Ardabil; the Masjid-i Maydān-i Sang, Kāshān; and the Friday Mosque of Yazd (Golombek and Wilber, *Timurid Architecture*, II, Figs 112, 128 and 144 respectively).
67. This was the most common disposition of these elements. Ilkhanid examples include the Friday Mosque of Varāmīn (Wilber, *Architecture of Islamic Iran*, Fig. 37); the caravanserai of Sin (ibid., Fig. 56) and the Friday Mosque of Kirmān (Pope and Ackerman, *Survey*, Fig. 395). Timurid examples are still more copious, and include the madrasa of Ulugh Beg in Bukhara, the Kalyan Masjid-i Jāmi' in the same city, the shrine of Gāzur Gāh near Herat, the madrasa of Khargerd, the Masjid-i Jadid at Turbat-i Shaykh Jām, and the Friday Mosques of Ziyāretgāh and Varzāna (Golombek and Wilber, *Timurid Architecture*, I, Figs 4, 6, 77, 84–5, 99, 102 and 143 respectively).
68. Godard, 'Historique du Masjid-i Djum'a', pp. 237–8 and Fig. 156 on p. 239; for an early photograph of the entire gate, see Grabar, *Great Mosque*, p. 100, Fig. 14.
69. Godard, 'Historique du Masjid-i Djum'a', Fig. 149; L. Honarfar, *Ganjina-yi Āsār-i Tārikh-i Esfahān* (Tehran, 1350 ASH, 2nd edn), plate on p. 81. Unfortunately, Galdieri and his team did not tackle what he terms 'the delicate problem of the portal dated 515H', and he adds 'therefore doubts about that very important area still remain' (*Isfahan*, p. 28). For the arson itself, see Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites*, p. 203.
70. Although such a reference may have been otiose, since Ibn al-'Adim notes (*Bughyat al-talab fi tārikh Halab*, partial ed. A. Sevim [as *Biyyografilerle tarihi Ibn'ul-Adim Bugyet'et-taleb fi tarihi Haleb*] [Ankara, 1992], p. 95) that Tāj al-Mulk himself acted as treasurer for Malikshāh (I am grateful to my wife Carole for this reference). Unlike Nizām al-Mulk in the south dome inscription, he employs his *kunya* – Abu'l-Ghanā'im ('Father of Riches', potentially a religious concept, since *ghanīma* is sometimes used in a legal context to describe booty won during *jihad*), and an official title, al-Marzubān. Though garnished by the Arabic definite article, this is a Persian term meaning 'Lord of the Marches'. His references to himself are thus more formal than those made by Nizām al-Mulk.
71. L. Gardet, 'Al-Asmā' al-Husnā', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, I, 714b.
72. D. B. Burrell and N. Daher, *Al-Ghazali on the Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God: Al-maqṣad al-asnā fi sharh asmā' Allāh al-husnā* (Cambridge, 1992).
73. For this panel, see G. Ventrone, 'Nota preliminare su un pannello con la preghiera per i dodici Imam della Masjid-i Ġum'a di Isfahan', *Studi Iranici: 17 Saggi di Iranisti Italiani* (Rome, 1977), pp. 85–108 and Figs 1–74; for a briefer account, see Ventrone, 'On a Variety of Ilkhanid Wall Decoration', in *Isfahan. Quaderni del Seminario di Iranistica, Uralo-Altaistica e Caucasologia dell'Università degli Studi di Venezia* 10 (Venice, 1981), pp. 53–68 and Figs 1–12.



74. M. Shayesteh Far, *Shi'ah Artistic Elements in the Timurid and the Early Safavid Periods: Book Illustrations and Inscriptions* (London, 1999), pp. 230, 387, notes that the use of the 99 Names was widespread in both the Timurid and Safavid periods in Iran, but gives no specific examples.
75. Of the 12 listings for Sura 17: 78–9 assembled by Dodd and Khairallah, six are from Iran, while a further one (from Zanzibar) attests Iranian influence (*Image of the Word*, II, p. 71).
76. Only one of the 13 listings in Dodd and Khairallah (*ibid.*, pp. 27–8) is from Iran. The example from the north dome chamber is not listed. For the most recent significant discussion of the Qur'anic inscriptions of the north dome chamber, see Blair, *Monumental Inscriptions*, pp. 164–7.
77. For a photograph of this inscription, see Galdieri, *Isfahan* I, plates 473, 476.
78. Or, if the north dome were indeed intended as an entrance, the mosque itself. I am indebted to David Gye for this suggestion.
79. See the penetrating analysis of them in Grabar, *Great Mosque*, pp. 39–40, pp. 50–1.
80. Pope, 'Note on the Aesthetic Character of the North Dome', Figs 5–7.
81. The nearest equivalent is perhaps the underside of the somewhat later tomb of Sultan Sanjar at Marv, where the apex of the dome also has an oculus; moreover, it has the same theme of stars within stars (D. Brandenburg and K. Brüsehoff, *Die Seldschuken. Baukunst des Islam in Persien und Turkmenien* [Graz, 1980], pp. 56–7, Figs 21, 22 and plate 68).
82. These have not been fully published, and thus their relevance to the building of 481 (1088) cannot be regarded as fully established. Compare, however, Galdieri, *Isfahan*, III, p. 27, which mentions 'a monumental brick inscription in Kufic characters' on 'the intrados facing South, i.e. towards the mosque itself'. This is presumably Qur'an 3: 26–7 (Grabar, *Great Mosque*, p. 40).
83. It is just conceivable that this inscription is, indeed, a deliberate if veiled challenge to the caliph's authority (despite the fact that the caliph is specifically named), at a time when the tussle for political supremacy between caliph and sultan was particularly intense (Makdisi, 'Les rapports entre calife et sultan', pp. 235–6).

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